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# *Red*

PAPERS ON MUSICAL SUBJECTS



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RED

*Carl Van Vechten*

RED

PAPERS ON MUSICAL SUBJECTS



*New York · 1925*

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*For Ralph Barton,*  
*with my admiration,*  
*this superfluous pigment for his*  
*immarcescible palette*





*Red is the colour of youth. Oxen and turkeys are  
always enraged when they see it.*

ROBERT SCHUMANN.



## *A Valedictory*

### I

Some ill-considered author once formulated a theory, which since has gained considerably more currency than it deserves, that the corps of critics is recruited from the ranks of unsuccessful novelists. It would be more easy to credit the converse of this fantastic supposition. Indeed, if nine-tenths of our novelists were critics it would not be possible for them to write such bad novels. Speaking for myself, I may say that I was both a dramatic and a music critic before I had conceived the idea that I should ever write a novel.

Ten or twelve years ago, Miss Geraldine Farrar remarked to an interviewer that singers should retire at the age of forty. In conversation, at any rate, I remember often to have expressed myself similarly in regard to critics of music. When I was younger I held the firm belief that after forty the cells hardened and that prejudices were formed which precluded the possibility of the welcoming of novelty. From almost the moment I began to write on the subject of music, therefore, I took it upon myself to



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attack the older men who had closed their minds to new ideas. However that may be, Miss Farrar did not retire, and I did.

For twenty years, with a fringe of months at either end of this period, I attended a concert or an opera or a play nearly every evening, and, for long stretches, nearly every afternoon as well. There have been countless occasions on which I have heard parts of three or four operas and concerts during the same evening. This consistent activity was carried on in several cities: Chicago, New York, London, Paris, Munich, and elsewhere, and for at least sixteen of the twenty years I not only attended these entertainments, I also wrote about them.

Towards the end I grew very tired of this routine. Music, the drama, singers and actors, began to have precious little new to say to me, and I began to have precious little new to say about them. Had I continued, I should have been obliged to repeat myself, besides boring myself to death and running the by no means unlikely risk of catching a series of colds in draughty halls. Also, I recognized the symptoms of age creeping upon me. I began to prefer Johann Strauss waltzes to the last sonatas of Beethoven; Chopin pleased me more than Brahms. I determined, therefore, to step aside to make way for the younger generation, who are

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hereby given permission to transfer what I said ten years ago about Stravinsky and Satie to Darius Milhaud and the young Italians.

There was a still more pregnant reason for my desertion of the camp of musical criticism. I seemed always to be about ten years ahead of most of the other critics and the orchestral conductors who make out programs. I missed the reviling of Wagner in New York, but I have watched the pundits of the press revile, in turn, Richard Strauss, Debussy, and Stravinsky, only, in the end, after their ears, through repeated hearings, had grown accustomed to the new clang-tints, to accept these composers as part of the sacred hierarchy. My orchestral education was carried on under Theodore Thomas in Chicago. Now Thomas was not a great conductor, although he always gave honest musical readings of his scores, but he had one great virtue: he believed that new music should be heard. He performed, therefore, every important European composition as soon as possible after it had been performed abroad. As a result, when I arrived in New York in 1906, having listened to and appraised nearly all the major works of Strauss and Debussy composed up to that date, I was amazed to discover that the New York critics were still fighting about these composers, first underpraising them and a little later overpraising

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them, for Strauss, at any rate, to my mind, has never been a whit superior as a composer to such a man as Liszt. In Paris, in 1913, I heard Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* and a good deal more of this Russian's music. I wrote a panegyric about *Le Sacre du Printemps* in my first book,<sup>1</sup> published in 1915. In 1924, *Le Sacre du Printemps* has at last been performed in New York and the critics have at last accepted Stravinsky. So, indeed, apparently, have the conductors who, until the past four years, hardly ever permitted his name to be emblazoned on their programs. The job of music critic in New York, therefore, is certainly not an ideal occupation for a man with imagination and foresight.

I might further urge that there were economic reasons for my shift of professions, for I realized but small sums of silver from this great outlay of labour. My stipend from the newspapers for which I worked was decidedly modest; the several volumes of criticism which I published, while encomiastically reviewed (Henry Mencken hailed even my first book with delight, seeing in it possibly, as did Peter Whiffle, the germ of future achievement), enjoyed but a small sale. Most of them, indeed, were "remaindered." I doubt if any one makes money out of music criticism. The late James Huneker, as prominent an

<sup>1</sup> Music After the Great War.



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exponent of the profession as any one I could name offhand, died poor, notwithstanding the fact that he had always led an extremely simple life. I wonder if even Ernest Newman, probably the best living critic of music—or if not the best critic, at least the best writer on music—is driving about in a Rolls-Royce? Music criticism is poorly paid because it is poorly read. A novel, which is perhaps twice as easy to write—for any one who can write it at all—as such a book as the one that follows this preface, a novel, I say, which requires even in extreme instances about one-third as much documentation or fundamental knowledge as even a book like this poor *Red*, not only brings one money, it also brings one readers.

To be perfectly frank, however, I must state that the matter of economics never really entered into the question of my decision. Henry James once wrote, and he was writing about critics: "The sense of effort is easily lost in the enthusiasm of curiosity." When I first began to attend the opera and concerts and the theatre I went because I liked to go. It was, I honestly believe, a desire to broaden my prospects in these respects that got me out of the state of Iowa, where opportunities of this nature were meagre. I think it was the primary reason for my leaving Chicago, after I had spent seven years in that

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city. I am sure that a hankering to hear Wagner in Munich was the inspiration for my first trip to Europe. Up until about the year 1918, in fact, my enthusiasm for the art under discussion sustained me in the belief that I should be writing about music throughout the length and breadth of my career. About that date I began to nourish doubts; sketches foreshadowing my future fictions began to appear in my books; I became uneasy in the concert hall; in short, I began to realize that I was nearly through. The last two papers in this volume reflect some of the reasons for this metamorphosis.

Certainly, I do not regret those years. They supplied me with not a little knowledge and experience; they served to introduce me, in one way or another, to most of the famous people of the period, but when a thing is done, it is done, at least so far as I am concerned. I have not entered an opera house for several seasons, and my recent attendance on the concert hall has been limited to a few special occasions.

I am delighted to see that many of my suggestions and prophecies have been realized. When I published my book about Spanish music, not one orchestral composition by a Spaniard, at least so far as I am aware, had yet been performed in our concert halls. This absurd state of affairs has since been remedied. Stravinsky,

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whom I have considered, since I first became acquainted with his music eleven years ago, the most important of living composers, is now generally recognized as such. As for my plea that American popular music be taken more seriously, Eva Gauthier recently devoted an entire group on a recital program to jazz songs; a celebrated pianist has included Zez Confrey's Kitten on the Keys in his repertory; Paul Whiteman has given a series of concerts devoted to American jazz, which have created a sensation in musical circles (even Mengelberg has come forward with his word of commendation); more than all, George Gershwin has composed and performed his Rhapsody in Blue, a work in concerto form for piano and orchestra, in which jazz is utilized in a musicianly manner (as I predicted it would be in The Great American Composer) to create just the effect that Liszt got into his rhapsodies by a use of Hungarian tunes, or Albéniz into his Iberia suite, which is based on suggestions in melody and rhythm of Spanish popular dances. Jazz may not be the last hope of American music, nor yet the best hope, but at present, I am convinced, it is its only hope.

## II

There remained to solve, however, the problem of my early books, most of which are out of

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print, and which, for sufficiently good reasons, I shall never republish in their original forms or under their original titles. These volumes naturally contain much material that I should never care to reprint; moreover the later volumes include not only papers on musical subjects but also my first attempts at fictional sketches, for it was necessary for me to convince myself that I could write fiction before I undertook to do so on a large scale. There were also to be considered a number of papers which had appeared in magazines, but which had not yet been published in book form.

After a reperusal of the books in question—I may say that it is a habit of mine never to reread one of my books after it has come out, except for some reason like the present one—I have selected such papers on musical subjects as I care to preserve, save for a few dealing with specific composers, later to find their niches in a book to be entitled *Excavations*, which will also include papers on certain figures in the literary world whose reputations I have had some share in rescuing from comparative obscurity.

*Music for the Movies* is lifted from *Music and Bad Manners*; *Why Music is Unpopular*, *The Great American Composer*, and *The Importance of Electrical Picture Concerts*, from *Interpreters and Interpretations*; *The Authoritative Work on American Music* and *The New Art*

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of the Singer, from *The Merry-Go-Round*; Variations on a Theme by Havelock Ellis, *On the Relative Difficulties of Depicting Heaven and Hell in Music*, and *On the Rewriting of Masterpieces*, from *In the Garret*. Of the other three papers, none of which has previously been published in a book, *Movies for Program Notes* appeared in *The Wave*; *On Hearing What You Want When You Want It*, in *The Musical Quarterly*, and *Cordite for Concerts*, in *The Smart Set*.

I cannot say that I subscribe to all the general ideas expressed herein; as a matter of fact, they are not all entirely consistent, a state of affairs to have been expected in the work of a writer who apparently at heart was always creative rather than critical, but I believed them when I wrote them and that condition gives them whatever value they may now possess. They are, fortunately, dated. In all these papers I have made omissions, altered words and phrases, added a few others, and appended footnotes. On the whole, however, I have left them as they were; they are, therefore, not to be regarded as rewritten; they may be said to represent with some accuracy a phase and a period of my career which in all likelihood is at an end.

*New York.*

*March 11, 1924.*





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# *Red*

PAPERS ON MUSICAL SUBJECTS





## *Why Music is Unpopular*

Music criticism usually divides itself automatically into two classes. In the one, the critic, whose emotions have ostensibly been aroused by poems in tone, tries to render to the reader the intensity of his feelings by quoting from the word poets. The first line of *Endymion* and passages from Shakespeare fall athwart his pages. Scarcely a musical note but has its literary echo. The music of Maurice Ravel reminds this unimaginative scribe of verses from Arthur Rimbaud and Jules Laforgue; snippets and snatches from Keats and Wordsworth serve admirably to evoke the spirit of almost any composer; I have found Walt Whitman linked with Edward MacDowell; Milton and Handel are occasionally made to seem to speak the same language; Byron and Tchaikovsky are asked to walk hand in hand. If you have never heard Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, it may afford you some small consolation to find it tied up in the reviewer's mind with something like this:

"Come and trip it as you go  
On the light fantastic toe."

[1]

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It is quite likely, indeed, that an audience of silly maiden ladies in the middle west, unaccomplished in the skill of tones, hearing little music, applauds delightedly this soft sobbery. Two often apposite lines, however, I have never come upon in music criticism. This, from W. B. Yeats's *King and No King*, would certainly fit many a singer: "Would it were anything but merely voice!" and sometimes, after a few days of shameless concert-going with a friend from out of town, I feel tempted to reassure him, Calibanwise: "Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises."

Our second critic approaches his task with more sobriety of expression. He believes it to be his bounden, and unenlivening, duty to avoid florid language in his dismal effort to impress his readers with the sublime seriousness of the art he so laboriously strives to hold within academically prescribed limits. His erudite style bristles with adverbial clauses, with technical conjurations, abjurations, and apostrophes. He summons the eleven dull devils of dusty knowledge to his aid in his consistent endeavour to be accurate and just. He never deals in metaphor, never in simile; no figures of speech whatever sully the dead drab of his columns; he would consider them, if he thought about the matter at all, cheapening influences, encroaching on the drowsy preserves of his somnolent profession. With

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as pedantic a gesture as he can command, and his talents in this direction are considerable, he lays out his weights and measures, always qualifying, almost always. Buts, ifs, and in spite of s cumber his operose paragraphs. No music is perfect; none is imperfect. With this axiom, liberally disregarded by more lively writers, for a text, he proceeds to tell us that the allegro of the new fantasia is admirable in form, but that the themes, *perhaps*, do not justify such elaborate treatment. He emphasizes history; he leans on handbooks; musty facts are dragged in palestrically for their own sake alone. His manner is formidable, exegetical, eupeptic, adynamic, asthenic. He clings to cliché: "The composition smells of the midnight oil," etc., etc.

These two varieties of critics are only too actually with us on every side, not only in New York and Boston, but in London, Paris, and Berlin as well. They always have been and they always will be with us. They are one of the principal causes for the profound and unfortunate indifference, nay contempt, with which music (as an art) is regarded by the man who may take an enormous amount of pleasure out of reading books or looking at pictures. Instead of awakening an interest in the greatest and most mysterious of the arts, these obstinate fellows have acted as direct agents in the perpetuation of the

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bugaboos and voodooos of the academy, freely offering incense and the freshly slain sacrifices of baby composers to the false gods of their fathers. Often, indeed, their crime is feticide. Far from urging the layman to enter the sacred temples, rather they frighten him away. "Come and listen" is a phrase that is never on their lips, never flows from their pens. On the contrary, they write: "Turn about. I have spent my whole life, and I am an old man, trying to learn what you never can hope to know. Any pleasure you may derive from listening to music is a false pleasure, because it is not based on knowledge. Pleasure, indeed, is forbidden; the initiated do not enjoy themselves. Retreat, young man; go back to your books and pictures; the gods of music desire none such as you to draw near to their altars." Instead, indeed, of sending the reader to the nearest concert hall, they have made him take an oath that never, if he knows it, will he voluntarily set foot in such a place. I am presupposing readers! The truth is that these men, after a time, are not even read, save by sopranos and fiddlers, and their early readers, sceptical thereafter regarding all literature devoted to a discussion of music, never again will peruse a line of what they have been led to consider, through these unfortunate examples, as hopeless drivel. Thereby they shut themselves off, unwittingly, not only from further

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communion with music itself, but also from intimacy with one of the most delightful sidetracks of the art of letters, for it cannot be denied that Berlioz and Ernest Newman and Ethel Smyth would amuse and interest even a tone-deaf Methodist hardware importer.

For there are other kinds of music critics, besides the two varieties which I have described. There is, for instance, the man who writes with a flourish, indulges in "fine writing" and what is "precious," and vocalizes with adjectives. You may not agree with his hyperbolic statement that Grieg and MacDowell were the foremost musicians of the nineteenth century, but you are interested in it because he means it and because he is not afraid to say so emphatically. "Perhaps," on occasion you whisper to yourself chasteningly, "he is right. It may even be possible that Mendelssohn was greater than Beethoven."

Another reviewer slashes violently into some school or other; he drives his sword sharply into the heart of your pet theory, while valiantly defending as good a one of his own; he dips his pen in gall and guides it over paper soaked in wormwood. He despises the new music, any *new* music, and he consumes nine thousand words in explaining why; he loathes the opera, and he throws all the weight of his influential opinion against it. This man is readable and interesting.



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His views assume importance even to the reader who does not agree with them, because they arouse curiosity. "Can the music of Schoenberg be as bad as all that?" you question yourself, and then decide, "I must hear it and form my own opinion."

A third writer mingles anecdote with more pregnant matter; nothing is too trivial for his purpose, nothing too serious. He is accurate without being pedantic; he paints the human side of the art. He draws us nearer to compositions by discussing the composers. When he writes of a singer it is not as though he were describing a vocal machine, emitting perfect and imperfect notes; he pictures a human being applying herself to her task; his account is vivid, humorous, sometimes a trifle malicious. He enlivens us and he awakens our interest. This is not altogether a matter of style; it is also a matter of feeling. The style is perhaps the man.

There are but two rules for the critic to follow: have something to say and say it as well as you know how; say it with charm or say it with force, but say it naturally; do not be afraid to say today what you may regret tomorrow; and, above all, do not befuddle and befog the mind of your reader by dragging in Shelley, Francis Thompson, William Blake, and Verlaine. If you can actually suggest ideas to him by quoting from the

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poets, then by all means quote freely, but do not try to kindle in him the sensation caused by a hearing of César Franck's D minor Symphony by printing copious excerpts from the published works of Swinburne and Mallarmé. Music criticism has two purposes, beyond the obvious and essential one that it provides a bad livelihood for the critic: the first, and perhaps the most important, is to entertain the reader, because criticism, like any other form of literature, should stand by itself and not lean too heavily on the matter of which it treats; the second is to interest the reader in music, or in books about music, or even in musicians. Criticism can be informing without being pedantic; it can prod the pachydermatous hide of a conservative old foggy concert-goer without deviating from the facts. Above all else criticism should be an expression of personal feeling. Otherwise it has no value. "Whoever has been through the experience of discussing criticism with a thorough, perfect, and entire Ass," writes Bernard Shaw, "has been told that criticism should above all things be free from personal feeling."

On one occasion I experienced an irrepressible desire to rail against the intellectual snobbery which persuaded flaccid minds that the string quartet was the noblest musical art form and that the organizations which devoted themselves to

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this fetish were archangelic interpreters of a heavenly song. I might have said: "The string quartet is an overrated art form. Certainly, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms have poured some of their finest inspiration into this mould, some of their most musical feeling, and yet the nature of this music is such that its interpreters derive more pleasure from its performance than its auditors." It is possible that these sentences might have been read, and if so, understood . . . and forgotten. If every time I expressed a personal feeling, and all my feelings and tastes are intensely personal, I followed with something like this, "it seems to me," or "this may or may not be true," or "according to my taste," or "Mr. Thing does not agree with me," my utterances would lose whatever charm or force they possess, and they would be so clogged with extraneous qualifications that no one would think of reading them. "It is the fault of our rhetoric," Emerson once wrote, "that we cannot strongly state one fact without seeming to belie some other." What I did say about string quartets provoked attention.<sup>1</sup> Philip Hale remarked that the

<sup>1</sup> The curious may discover what I did say by reading a paper entitled, *Music for Museums*. Initially printed in a now defunct periodical of some parts, called *Rogue* (May 15, 1915), this paper later became the only section I can recall with any patience of a vile book (my first), *Music After the Great War*; G. Schirmer; 1915. I dare say some edition is still in print,

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older lions roared and shook their manes because I had spoken disrespectfully of chamber music, which thus suffered along with the equator. Perhaps. However, a certain salutary disrespect for the snobbery of string quartet fanatics survived . . . also along with the equator.

It is not necessary, gracious reader, that you should agree with the critic. You will satisfy no longing in the heart of the animal if you do agree with him, unless he be made of base metal. It will require only a little reading on your part to convince you that the critics themselves, especially the best and most interesting critics, do not agree. There exist no standards, it would seem, by which music can be assessed and judged with any degree of finality. Lawrence Gilman gives us plenty of evidence on this point,<sup>1</sup> if any were needed. He reminds us that John F. Runciman viewed Parsifal with a contemptuous eye, calling the music "decrepit stuff," "the last sad quaverings of a beloved friend," while Ernest Newman describes it as "in many ways the most wonderful and impressive thing ever done in music." Vernon Blackburn regarded Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* as the finest musical work since Wagner, but George Moore dismisses it briefly as "holy water in a German beer-barrel." H. E. Krehbiel con-

<sup>1</sup> In a paper called, *Taste in Music*, which appeared in *The Musical Quarterly*, January, 1917.

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siders Pelléas et Mélisande a score of which "nine-tenths is dreary monotony," whereas Louis Laloy is stirred to reverence by contemplation of its beauty. Jean Marnold and H. T. Finck do not agree about Carmen, and W. J. Henderson and James Huneker hold opposing opinions regarding the merits of Strauss's Don Quixote.

There are critics who accept Wagner whole: Rienzi, Lohengrin, Ring, and Parsifal; others find nothing to enjoy or praise in certain of his works and even discover tiresome passages in Die Walküre. Some critics profess to admire folksongs and folksong influences; others do not. Many otherwise estimable men have been found who are willing to subscribe to an everlasting veneration for the music of Liszt, a fancy, even, for the compositions of Rubinstein. I have read in several newspapers and at least one magazine that Horatio Parker's Mona was a valuable contribution to our national art. It is possible. When we are informed that Percy Grainger is a greater composer than Debussy we may be interested, if we are interested in the manner of the telling, but we are not obliged to accept the statement as literally true.

To be sure, the acknowledgment is pretty general that Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart were great composers, but some critics insist that the musicians who imitate the forms and styles of



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these masters today are great composers, a point of view which always awakens the murderous instinct within me, as it should be apparent to the veriest dolt that an artist in some way must reflect the spirit of his own epoch. Besides what one man has done naturally, another copies servilely and without reason. Bach employed the fugue because it was the natural form into which his ideas came to him. Subsequent composers, for the greater part, have used the fugue as an end in itself.

There are a few delightful writers about music, and you will find that all of them, in one way or another, bear out the point of my remarks. There are too many others who are hedging the most universal of the arts away from the people to whom it belongs, protecting it with their damp vapourings, their vapid technicalities, their worship of Clio, their stringent analyses, or, worse than anything else, their extensive explanations.<sup>1</sup> Let each judge for himself, and let every one be encouraged to judge. Let more think about music; to make that possible, curiosity must be stimulated, so that there may be a more general

<sup>1</sup> Le critique sceptique, toujours en défiance même contre sa propre sensibilité, est mené par la peur d'être dupe; il adopte volontiers le ton de l'ironie ou même celui du badinage. Il craint l'enthousiasme comme une maladie et se tire de toutes les difficultés au moyen d'un sourire et parfois d'une grimace." Remy de Gourmont: *Promenades Littéraires*; I, 70.

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desire to *hear* music, especially new music. Books are on every hand; if one does not visit galleries, at least one cannot escape reproductions of good pictures in our periodicals and in the Sunday supplements of the newspapers, but to hear music (I am speaking, of course, of so-called "art music") it is necessary to visit certain halls on certain days. This requires encouragement because it also requires patience. Why, I have waited more than twelve years to hear Vincent d'Indy's *Istar* only to discover that I have heard it too late. The conductors of our concerts make these matters difficult; do not let our critics make them more so.

In the stricter interests of accuracy this paper, of course, should have been christened *Some remarks on one of the reasons for the comparative unpopularity of music as an art form, an exact description of its contents, but if I had called it that do you think you would have read it?*

*March 1, 1917.*

## *The Great American Composer*

When, a hundred years hence, some curious investigator searches through the available archives in an attempt to discover what was the state of American music at the beginning of the twentieth century, do you fancy that he will take the trouble to exhume and dig into the ponderous scores of Henry Hadley, Arthur Foote, Ernest Schelling, George W. Chadwick, Horatio W. Parker, and the rest of the crew who are regarded with respect by contemporary critics? Will he hesitate ten minutes to peruse the scores of *Mona*, the *Four Seasons Symphony*, or *The Pipe of Desire*? A plethora of books and papers will cause him to wonder why so much pother was made about Edward MacDowell, and he will even shake his head a trifle wearily over the saccharine delights of *The Rosary* and *Narcissus*. But if he be lucky enough to come upon copies of *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee*, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, or *Hello Frisco*, which are generally regarded with horror by the music critics of our day, his face will light up and he will feel an emotion akin

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to that which Yvette Guilbert must have felt when she unearthed *Le cycle du vin*, or *Le lien serré*, or *C'est le mai*, and he will attempt to find out, probably in vain, something about the composers, Lewis F. Muir, Irving Berlin, and Louis A. Hirsch, the true grandfathers of the great American composer of the year 2001.

There will be difficulties in his way. Nothing disappears so soon from the face of the earth as a *very* popular song. The music shops sell hundreds of thousands of copies before the demand suddenly ceases. Then, when no more copies are ordered from the publisher, he is likely to lose interest in a song which may occupy space that might be allotted to a newer tune, and he causes the destruction of the plates. As for the purchasers, on every moving day they consign their old popular songs to the dustheap. After the Ball makes way for Two Little Girls in Blue (or vice-versa; I really cannot be expected to remember *that* far back). Try to buy After the Ball now and see if you can. Advertise for a copy and see if you can secure one. You will find it difficult, I imagine, and yet it was only as far back as 1892, or 1893, that everybody was singing this melancholy tale of the misadventures of a little girl in a big city. No doubt, at that period, kind old ladies stopped on the street to

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pat bleached blondes on the cheeks, with the reflection, She may be *somebody's* daughter.

Music of that variety will not be sought after by collectors and prized and sung again, except to satisfy curiosity, or to "furnish innocent merriment." There will be those, no doubt, impelled to form a collection of the sentimentalities of the late nineteenth century, including therein the drawings of Howard Chandler Christy, which, in the year 2000, will be as rare as black hawthorn vases are today, and the novels of George Barr McCutcheon, a single copy of whose *Nedra* or *Graustark* may fetch the tidy sum of forty dollars in gold at some twenty-first century auction.

The American sentimental song, however, has been largely obliterated by the best new music of the twentieth century, into which a new quality has crept, a quality which may serve to keep it alive, just as the coon songs which preceded it in the nineteenth century have been kept alive. Dixie and such solemn tunes as were created by Stephen C. Foster are not to be scoffed at. They are not scoffed at, as we very well know. They are sung and played at the concerts given by sopranos and violinists like the folksongs of other nations. They are known all over the world. They have found their way into serious compositions by celebrated composers. Even the cakewalks of a



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later date, *The Georgia Campmeeting*,<sup>1</sup> *Whistling Rufus*, *Hello, Ma Baby*, and the works of Williams and Walker (curiously enough, the best ragtime has not been written by Negroes, although *Under the Bamboo Tree* and the extraordinary *At the Ball* are the creations of black men) have their value, but ragtime, as it exists today, had not been invented in the nineties. The apotheosis of syncopation had not begun. Not that syncopation is new in music. Nearly the whole of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* is based on it. Schumann scarcely wrote two consecutive bars which are not syncopated. But ragtime syncopation is different. Louis A. Hirsch once pointed out to me what he considered its distinctive feature. "The melody and harmony are syncopated separately,"<sup>2</sup> was his explanation and it will have to suffice, in spite of the fact that the same thing is true of the prelude to *Parsifal*, in which the conductor is forced to beat 6-4 time with one hand and 4-4 with the other, and of certain Spanish dances, in which singer, guitarist, dancer, and public vie with one

<sup>1</sup> Which obviously inspired Debussy's *Golliwogg's Cakewalk*.

<sup>2</sup> He added, further: "In ragtime the syncopation may occur at a different beat in each bar. It is unexpected." It should also be stated that there is usually a curiously exact relationship between the syncopation in the music and that in the words. Modern jazz, a later development of this type of music, has further added a novel colour interest.



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another to produce a bewildering complexity of rhythm. There is abundance of syncopation and the most esoteric rhythmic intricacy in Igor Stravinsky's ballet, *Le Sacre du Printemps* (on certain pages of this ballet the time-signature changes with every bar), but ragtime is not the word to describe that vivid score, nor is it likely that any one can find much resemblance between Everybody's Doing It or Ragging the Scale and the jota or the prelude to Parsifal.

Regard, for example, the form of Waiting for the Robert E. Lee. A writer in the London Times calls attention to the fact that, although for convenience it is written out in a rhythm of 8, it is really a rhythm of 3, followed by a rhythm of 5, proceeding without warning, occasionally, into the normal rhythm of 8. It is impossible for many trained singers to read ragtime at all.<sup>1</sup> They can decipher the notes, but they do not understand the conventions observed by the composers in setting these notes on paper, conven-

<sup>1</sup> European orchestras find the same difficulty. It is seldom that any tune of this character is ever properly performed as regards rhythm and tone-colour by any band in London, Paris, or Berlin, unless that band be American. This is partly due to the fact, doubtless, that ragtime and jazz composers are seldom trained musicians, so that their ideas created at the piano are incorrectly transcribed by alien pens, but more, perhaps, to the fact that there are certain subtleties inherent in the authentic performance of this music which cannot be set down in any current form of notation.

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tions which are the A B C's of every cabaret performer.

There is current an absurd theory to the effect that the test of good music is whether you tire of it or not. If I were to be permitted to apply this test I would say frankly that I no longer consider *Die Walküre* and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony good music. It is just as well to remember that if we heard the "classic" composers exploited by every street organ and cabaret pianist their music would soon become as intolerable as *Pretty Baby* has become during the summer just past. Probably a great many people are weary of listening to *Die Wacht am Rhein*, but that does not prove that it is not a good tune.

The creations of our best composers have been highly appreciated abroad. Stravinsky collects examples of them with assiduity and intends to use them in some of his forthcoming works,<sup>1</sup> just as he has utilized French and Russian popular songs in *The Firebird* and *Petrouchka*. Popular songs, indeed, form as good a basis for a serious composer to work upon as folksongs. This is a remark I have been intending to make for some time and it will do no harm to make it

<sup>1</sup> In 1919 Stravinsky composed his *Piano Ragtime* and his *Ragtime for orchestra* (violins, viola, double-bass, flute, clarinet, horn, cornet, trombone, percussion instruments and cymbalo. This work was performed in London, under the direction of Arthur Bliss, in 1920.

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emphatically. Examine, for example, the songs in the repertory of Yvette Guilbert; some are folksongs and some are not. I defy any one outside of Julien Tiersot, Professor Jean Beck, H. E. Krehbiel, and one or two others, to tell you which is which. These men, being tolerably familiar with the available collections of French folksongs, take it for granted, when they hear Mme. Guilbert sing a melody strange to them, that it must have had a composer. There seems to be no other known method for distinguishing between a folksong and a popular tune of the same epoch. A folksong, according to some authorities, is a song which has no composer; it just grows. Some one sings it one day in the fields, some one else adds to it, and, finally, there it is before your ears, a song known all over the country-side, but no one knows who started it rolling.<sup>1</sup> Swing low, sweet chariot is alleged to be such a folksong; it is an extremely good

<sup>1</sup>I may be permitted to state that I do not subscribe to this absurd theory, which, dictated and thundered forth by certain academicians, was allowed for a time to pass unchallenged. Later authorities do not accept this view. Note, for example, what J. S. Curwen has to say in his preface to *Folksongs of Many Lands*: "I have waded through a great many prefaces to collections of French, German, Scandinavian, and other folksongs, but have never found a statement of the 'evolved' origin of the folksong such is upheld at the present time (1911) by some collectors in England. . . . Of one thing I am sure. The charming melodies in this book, full of formal beauty, of daintily-

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example of a tune without a known composer, and it has been quoted with effect in Dvořák's symphony, *From the New World*. *Funiculi Funicula*<sup>1</sup> is not a folksong. It is a popular Neapolitan song, composed by Denza to celebrate the funicular railway at Naples. Nevertheless, Richard Strauss himself quoted it bodily in his symphonic fantasia, *Aus Italien*, although, to be sure, he laboured under the impression at the time that it was a folksong. In a similar fashion an American tune, *It looks to me like a big night tonight*, found its way into *Elektra*. This may have been unconscious assimilation on the part of Strauss; at any rate it is interesting to note how a vulgar air has been transformed into the beautiful theme—one of the most expressive in this music drama—of the Children of

curved tonal lines, of haunting rhythms and cadences that carry forward the interest, are the work of men and women, who, whether they knew the fact or not, were artists. These tunes were composed for the people, not by the people. The idea that from an amorphous condition these melodies were gradually moulded into shape by being handed from one untutored singer to another is to me unthinkable. Popular use deteriorates melodies; it does not shape them." For an extended discussion of the whole matter from this point of view, see Francis Clarke's paper: *Beastly Tunes*; *The London Mercury*; III, 510. My own definition of a folksong would be that it is a popular song, of which the name of the composer has been forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> Most popular Neapolitan songs, such as *O Sole Mio*, *Santa Lucia*, and *Maria, Mari*, are not folksongs in the academic sense of the word.

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Agamemnon. When Paul Dukas's lyric drama, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, the reviewers, almost to a man, referred to the song of the wives, which floats out of the cellar of the castle when *Ariane* opens the forbidden door in the first act, as a Brittany folksong. So it may very well be; I believe, indeed, that Dukas has said that it was. However, I am informed on excellent authority that he composed it himself! It has, to be sure, a folksong air, and it is interesting to catch its resemblance to the *Berceuse* of the Princess of the Sea in Rimsky-Korsakoff's opera, *Sadko*, and to the old Spanish tune, known to us as *Flee as a Bird*. *La jambe de bois*, borrowed by Stravinsky for an effect in the first scene of *Petrouchka*, might be a folksong, but it is not. It is a popular French air. "When Elgar used a genuine Welsh folksong in his *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*, a well-known London critic, a prominent member of the Folksong Society, declared it to be a poor imitation of the folk-style," writes Ernest Newman. "When the legend got about that a certain melody in *In the South* was an Italian folksong, the same critic recognized the genuine folk-quality in it, and it was distinctly unfortunate for him that the melody happened to be Elgar's own invention from first to last."

Thus it happens that while many composers,



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even such celebrated men, in their day, as Raff, Rubinstein, Gade, and Mendelssohn, swiftly drop into oblivion, the composer of a good popular song is assured of immortality, as such things go. His song may be sung a century, indeed, after his name is forgotten. Sometimes, by a strange fatality, even his name may be remembered, along with his music. It must be apparent to any one that *The Old Folks at Home*, *Dixie*, *My Old Kentucky Home*, and *Old Black Joe* are better known and more admired today than the operas of Meyerbeer.

It is my opinion that the best contemporary American composers (I am still referring to Irving Berlin, Louis Hirsch, and others of their kind)<sup>1</sup> have brought a new quality into music, a spirit analogous to that to be found in the best

<sup>1</sup> These names seem almost classic now. Many new names should be added; among others, certainly that of George Gershwin, whose *I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise*, obviously inspired by the manner of Negro spirituals, I must consider the most perfect piece of jazz yet written; Zez Confrey, with his diverting and ingenious *Kitten on the Keys*; Abel Baer, with his *Mama Loves Papa*; Walter Donaldson, with *Carolina in the Morning*. On November 1, 1923, at a concert in Æolian Hall, New York, Eva Gauthier sang a group of these songs. Their position on the program stood between a group by Bela Bartok and Paul Hindemuth and an air from Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*. The group included Irving Berlin's masterpiece, Alexander's *Ragtime Band*, Jerome Kern's *The Siren's Song*, Walter Donaldson's *Carolina in the Morning*, and George Gershwin's *I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise*, *Swanee*, and *Innocent In-*



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folk-dances of Spain, in Gipsy, Hungarian and Russian popular music, and an entirely novel form. They have, to be sure, been working for a livelihood, but in that respect they have only followed the excellent precedent established by Offenbach, Richard Strauss, and Puccini. Bernard Shaw has probably made a great deal more money than Henry Arthur Jones, but no one thinks of calling him less of an artist than Mr. Jones for that reason. Zuloaga sells his portraits at very high rates; is he therefore to be considered less seriously than a portrait-painter in Greenwich Village who gives his canvases

genue Baby. For an encore, Mme. Gauthier added Gershwin's Do It Again. Gershwin himself played very brilliant accompaniments for these songs. I think, speaking historically, that this was the first time in America that a singer had included modern jazz numbers in a serious recital program. It is possible, however, that it had been done before in Paris. Paul Whiteman, too, has made a serious effort to glorify jazz. He was one of the first to perceive the advantage of arranging these numbers with symphonic scoring, making the most, as well, of effects peculiar to the jazz orchestra, such as covering the bell of a cornet with a hat, or augmenting the sound of a trumpet with a megaphone. Whiteman's orchestra, unlike most jazz bands, plays from score and does not depend on improvisation for its results. Even the paltriest tune, orchestrated by Ferdie Grofé, with infinite ingenuity and a profusion of novel colour and harmonic effects, and performed with the precision and beautiful tone quality possessed by this band, and with the fire put into it by their inspired leader, becomes important enough to listen to with pleasure. The brasses and woodwinds in this band are superior to those in any other orchestra with which

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away? There does not appear to exist, indeed, any particular reason why an artist should not be permitted to make money if he be able to do so. It is the nature of some artists to shy at the annoyances and complications of business. The work of others, Stéphane Mallarmé, Monticelli, Robert Franz, is antipathetic to the crowd and always will be. Many of the greatest artists, however, have made the widest appeal (I might mention Beethoven, Michelangelo Buonarroti, and Tolstoy), and some few men of this stamp have been able to transform their inspirations into gold. In the circumstances, it seems unfair to speak derogatively of Irving Berlin merely because he happens to make money.

The most obvious point of superiority of our ragtime composers, overlooking, for the moment, the fact that their music is pleasanter to listen to, over Messrs. Parker, Chadwick, and Hadley, is that they are expressing the very soul of a nation and an epoch, while their more serious

I am acquainted, and the ability of several of its members to play a variety of instruments makes it possible to obtain a profusion of varied colour combinations with a modest personnel. The unusually gifted Ross Gorman alone is equally proficient on E flat and B flat soprano saxophones, E flat alto saxophone, oboe and bass oboe, heckelphone, E flat and B flat alto and bass clarinets, and octavion. Others in the band are nearly as versatile. The skilful employment of piano and banjo in these orchestrations is also to be noted.

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confrères are struggling to pour into the forms of the past the thoughts of the past, rearranged, to be sure, but without notable inspiration. They have nothing new to say, and no particular reason for saying it. Louis Hirsch once told me of a conversation he had overheard at Rafael Joseffy's: A new pupil entered and proceeded to play for the master. Joseffy interrupted her. "You are not playing the right notes," he said. "I'm sure that I am," she replied. "Begin once more." She did so. Joseffy interrupted her again: "That's wrong. It isn't written like that." "But it is. Won't you look at it, please?" After examining the score the master apologized: "O, it's something of MacDowell's. I thought you were trying to play a transcription of the Tristan prelude." "I have remarked," writes Turgenev, in one of his letters to Pauline Viardot, "that in imitative work the most spirituelles are precisely the most detestable when they take themselves seriously. A sot copies servilely; a man of spirit without talent imitates pretentiously and with an effort, with the worst of all efforts, with that of wishing to be original."

It is only through the trenchant pens of our new composers that the complicated vigour of American life has been expressed in tone. It is the only music created in America today which is

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worth the paper on which it is written. It is the only American music which is enjoyed by the nation (even lovers of Mozart and Debussy prefer ragtime to the inert and saponaceous classicism of our more serious-minded composers); it is the only American music which is heard abroad (and it is heard everywhere, in the trenches by way of the victrola, in the Café de Paris at Monte Carlo, in Cairo, in India, and in Australia); and it is the only music on which the musicians of our land can build in the future. If it be urged against it that it is a hybrid product, depending upon Negro and Spanish rhythms, at least the same objection can be urged against Spanish music itself, which has emerged from the music of the Moors and the Arabs; Havelock Ellis even detects Greek and Egyptian influences.

If the American composers with (what they consider) more serious aims, instead of writing symphonies or other tattered and exhausted forms which belong to another age of composition, would strive to put into their music the rhythms and tunes that dominate the hearts of the people, a new form would evolve which might prove to be the child of the Great American Composer we have all been waiting for so long and so anxiously.<sup>1</sup> I do not mean to suggest

<sup>1</sup> Henry F. Gilbert has composed a set of American Dances in ragtime rhythm, besides his ballet, *The Dance in Place*

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that Edgar Stillman Kelley should write variations on the theme of *O, You Beautiful Doll*! or that Arthur Farwell should compose a symphony utilizing *The Gaby Glide* for the first subject of the allegro and *Everybody's Doing It* for the second, with the adagio based on *Pretty Baby* in a minor key. It is not my intention to encourage some one to write a tone-poem called *New York*, in which all these songs and ten or fifteen more should be thematically bundled together and finally wrapped in the profundities of a fugue. But if a composer, bearing the spirit and rhythm

*Congo*, *Humoresque on Negro Minstrel Tunes*, *Negro Rhapsody*, and *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes*. For such of this music as I have heard I can confess to no warm regard. John Powell's *Rhapsodie Nègre* for piano and orchestra and John Alden Carpenter's *Krazy Kat* jazz pantomime are better, but since hearing George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, performed by the composer for the first time at Paul Whiteman's concert of American music at Æolian Hall on February 12, 1924, I am convinced that the best serious music along these lines will be written by the jazz composers themselves. Gershwin is a composer of popular hits, but unlike the greater number of his confrères, he is also an expert musician. The *Rhapsody in Blue*, constructed on the formula of a Liszt piano concerto, is not novel in form, but it is entirely novel in content. Gershwin has built up the entire composition, even to the adagio and the cadenzas, on jazz themes, treated symphonically, with working-out sections, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of the sonata form. The themes are both highly original and highly typical. At least two of them are as good as any that Richard Strauss ever thought of. The orchestration (indicated by the composer but carried out by Ferdie Grofé) utilizes all the novel and



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and dynamics and clang-tints of this music in mind, will permit his inspiration to run riot, it will be quite unnecessary for him to quote or to pour his thought into the mould of the symphony or the string quartet or any other defunct form. The idea, manifestly based though it may be on the work of Irving Berlin and Louis Hirsch, will express itself in some new way. Percy Aldridge Grainger, Igor Stravinsky, Erik Satie are all working along these lines, to express modernity in tone, allowing the forms to create themselves, but, alas, none of these men is an American.

Americans are inclined to look everywhere but under their noses for art. It never occurs to them that any object which has any relation with their every-day life has anything to do with beauty. Probably the Athenians behaved in a similar fashion. When some stranger admired the classic pile on the Acropolis, the Greeks, it is safe to guess, turned up their noses with the scornful remark, "O, that old thing! That's the Parthenon; it's been there for ages." It will be remembered that Mytyl and Tytyl, in *The Bluebird*, spent considerable time and covered a good deal of ground in their search for that rare or-

beautiful tonal effects that have been invented by jazz bands. To my mind, indeed, this composition (I have heard it four times) is the best serious work yet created by an American musician, and, aside from its form, it is, indubitably, thoroughly American. It is now available on a phonograph record.



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nithological symbol, only to discover that it had existed all the time at home, the last place in the world they had thought to look for it. Our Woolworth and Flatiron Buildings we are likely to ignore, while we bow the knee before the Château district of Fifth Avenue and our ridiculous Public Library. Châteaux are all very well on the Loire, but imitations of them have no place in New York. As for that absurd Roman Library! The present building, years in course of construction, has already practically outgrown its space, and it is not yet a decade since it was first opened to the public. Acres have been wasted in the corridors alone. Of course, a library in New York should shoot up forty storeys towards the sky. Speeding elevators should hoist the student in a jiffy to whatever mental stimulation he requires. R. J. Coady, in an amusing magazine called *The Soil*,<sup>1</sup> has sung the praises of American machinery, and his illustrations exhibit these steel works of art, of the best kind since they are also utilitarian. One day Mina Loy picked up one of those pasteboard folders to which matches are attached, which are given away at all cigar counters for the use of patrons. "Some day," she said, "these will be very rare and then they will be considered beautiful." She was quite right. A few years after

<sup>1</sup> Now defunct. Five numbers were published in 1916-17.

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we discover how to light our cigarettes with our personal magnetism, or perhaps stop smoking altogether, such a contrivance will naturally assume an interest for curious collectors and thereby become automatically as diverting an object for a cabinet as a Japanese scent-bottle or a specimen of Capo di Monte porcelain. The Baron de Meyer has found it amusing to decorate rooms with Victorian atrocities, such as baskets of shells and antimacassars, the sort of thing that went with black-walnut whatnots, knitted fire-screens, and Rogers groups in the days, not so long ago, when Godey's Lady's Book reposed on the centre table near the family Bible.

In his essay on *The Poet*, Ralph Waldo Emerson found occasion to remark: "We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer; then in the Middle Age; then in Calvinism. Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism and Unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy and the temple of Delphi, and are as swiftly passing away." The poet, the novelist, in America, since Emerson's time, are at last aware of the

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value of this contemporary material. The musician, aside from the popular composer, is not, and we have not learned to appreciate the popular composer. It is apparently impossible to consider anything art which is constantly buzzing in our ears. It would be absurd, we think, to consider it as art, because it is so commonplace. One might as easily consider the Woolworth Building or the Manhattan Bridge or the Pennsylvania Station works of art, and how could any one possibly do that? Just the same, I am inclined to believe that the Pennsylvania Station, the Manhattan Bridge, and that "roaring, epic ragtime tune," *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee* are among the first twenty-four beautiful things created in America. It is no more use to imitate French or German music than it is to imitate French or German architecture. The sooner we realize this the better for all of us.

*January 23, 1917.*

*The Authoritative Work on American Music*

In his most earnest and persuasive manner, H. L. Mencken recently pointed out to me that it was my duty to write a book about the American composers, exposing their futile pretensions and describing their flaccid opera bar by bar. It was in vain that I urged that this would be but a sleeveless errand, arguing that I could not fight men of straw, that these our composers had no real standing in the concert halls, and that pushing them over would be an easy exercise for a child of ten. On the contrary, he retorted, they belonged to the academies; a great many persons believed they were important; it was necessary to dislodge this belief. I suggested, with a not too heavily assumed humility, that I had already done something of the kind in a paper entitled *The Great American Composer*. "A good beginning," asserted Colonel Mencken, "but not long enough. I won't be satisfied with anything less than a book." "But if I write a book about Professors Parker, Chadwick, Hadley, and the others, I could find nothing new to say of each

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of them; they are all alike. Neither their lives nor their music offer opportunities for variations." "An excellent ideal!" cried Major Mencken, enthusiastically. "Write one chapter and then repeat it verbatim throughout the book, changing only the name of the principal character. Then clap on a preface to explain your reason for this justifiable procedure." My last protest was the feeblest of all: "I can't spend a year or a month or a week poring over the scores of these fellows; I can't go to concerts to hear their music. I might as well go to work in a coal mine." "I'll do it for you!" triumphantly checkmated General Mencken. "I'll read the scores and you shall write the book." And so he left me, as on a similar occasion the fiend, having exhibited his prospectus, vanished from the vision of our Lord, and I returned to my garret sorely troubled, finding that the words of the man were running about in my head like so many little Japanese waltzing mice.

After much cogitation, I examined my bookshelves until I discovered a very large red tome written by Louis Charles Elson; then I searched until I found another by Rupert Hughes, and, sitting down, perused these to see if their words of praise for our weak musical brothers would stir me to operate. They did not. My heart action remained normal; no film formed over my



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eyes; foam did not issue from my mouth. I was able to read, indeed, quite calmly, in Mr. Hughes's *American Composers*, that A. J. Goodrich is "recognized among scholars abroad as one of the leading spirits of our time;" that "(Henry Holden) Huss has ransacked the piano and pilaged almost every imaginable fabric of high colour. . . . The result is gorgeous and purple;" that "The thing we are all waiting for is that American grand opera, *A Woman of Marblehead* (by Louis Adolphe Coerne). It is predicted that it will not receive the marble heart;" that "I know of no modern composer who has come nearer to relighting the fires that burn in the old gavottes and fugues and preludes (than Arthur Foote). His two gavottes are to me away the best since Bach;" that "the song (*Israel* by Edgar Stillman Kelley) is in my fervent belief, a masterwork of absolute genius, one of the very greatest lyrics in the world's music;" and, in *The History of American Music* by Louis C. Elson, that "Music has made even more rapid strides than literature among us," and that "(George W. Chadwick) has reconciled the symmetrical (sonata) form with modern passion." In the fourth volume<sup>1</sup> of *The Art of Music*, published by the National Society of Music, I found still more encomiums for our composers.

<sup>1</sup> Edited by Arthur Farwell and W. Dermot Darby.



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Therein I read with a sort of awed astonishment that one of the songs of Frederic Ayres "reveals a poignancy of imagination and a perception and apprehension of beauty seldom attained by any composer." I learned that T. Carl Whitmer has a "spiritual kinship" with Arthur Shepherd, Hans Pfitzner, and Vincent d'Indy. His music is "psychologically subtle and spiritually rarefied; in colour it corresponds to the violet end of the spectrum." Before he became acquainted with the later French idiom, Harvey W. Loomis "spontaneously breathed forth the quality of spirit which we now recognize in a Debussy or a Ravel." I flipped the pages until I came to the name of Miss Gena Branscombe: "Inexhaustible buoyancy, a superlative emotional wealth, and wholly singular gift of musical intuition are the qualities which have shaped the composer's musical personality (it might also be said without fear of contradiction that these are the qualities that shaped Beethoven's musical personality). . . . Her impatient melodies leap and dash with youthful life, while her accompaniments abound in harmonic hairbreadth escapes."

Curiously enough, however, these statements did not annoy me. I found no desire arising in me to deny them and doubtless, though mayhap with a guilty conscience, I should have ditched the undertaking, consigned it to that heap of

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undone duties, where already lie notes on a comparison of Andalusian mules with the mules of Liane de Pougy, a few scribbled memoranda for a treatise on the love habits of the mole, and a half-finished biography of the talented gentleman who signed his works Nick Carter, if my by this time quite roving eye had not alighted, entirely fortuitously, on one of the forgotten glories of my library, a slender volume entitled *Popular American Composers*.

I recalled how I had come by this book. Happening into a modest second-hand bookshop on lower Third Avenue, maintained chiefly for the laudable purpose of redistributing paper novels of the Seaside and kindred libraries, of which, alas, we hear very little nowadays, I asked the proprietor if, by chance, he possessed any literature pertaining to the art of music. By way of reply, he retired to the rear of his little room, searched for a space in a litter on the floor, and then returned with a pile of nine volumes or so in his arms. The other titles, such as *Great Violinists*, *Harmony in Thirteen Lessons*, and *How to Sing*, did not interest me, but, in idly turning the pages of this *Popular American Composers*, I came across a half-tone reproduction of a photograph of Paul Dresser, the only less celebrated brother of Theodore Dreiser, with a short biography of the composer of *On the Banks*

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of the Wabash. As Sir George Grove neglected to mention this portentous name in American art in his excellent dictionary (notwithstanding the fact that he devoted sixty-seven pages, printed in double columns, to Mendelssohn), I saw the advantage of adding the little book to my collection. The dealer, when questioned, offered to part with the volume for a total of fifteen cents. Once I had become more thoroughly acquainted with its pages I realized that I would willingly have paid fifteen dollars for it.

This book, indeed, cannot fail to delight Doctor Mencken. There is no reference in its pages to Edgar Stillman Kelley, Miss Gena Branscombe, Louis Adolphe Coerne, Henry Holden Huss, T. Carl Whitmer, Arthur Farwell, Arthur Foote, or A. J. Goodrich. In fact, if we overlook brief notices of John Philip Sousa, Harry von Tilzer, Paul Dresser, Charles K. Harris, and Hattie Starr (whom you will immediately recall as the composer of Little Alabama Coon), it may be stated categorically that the author, Frank L. Boyden, has not hesitated to go to the roots of his subject, brushing aside the music critics and their dicta, and has turned his attention to figures in the art life of America from whom Mencken himself, I feel sure, would not take a single paragraph of praise, so richly is it deserved. I am unfamiliar with the causes con-

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tributing to the book's obscurity; perhaps, indeed, they are akin to those responsible for the early failure of *Sister Carrie*. May we not even suspect that the odium cast by the Doubledays on the author of that romance was, quite possibly, actively transferred in some degree to a work which contained a biographical notice and a picture of his brother? However that may be, *Popular American Composers*, published in 1902, has fallen into undeserved oblivion, and so I make no apology for inviting my readers to peruse its pages with me.

Opening the book then, at random, I discover on page 96 a biography of Lottie A. Kellow (the lady's photograph graces the reverse of this page). In a few, well-chosen words, almost, indeed, in gipsy phrases, Mr. Boyden gives us the salient details of her career. Mrs. Kellow is a resident of Cresco, Iowa, a church singer of note, and the possessor of a contralto voice of great volume. As a composer she has to her credit "marches, cakewalks, schottisches, and other styles of instrumental music." We are offered a picture of Mrs. Kellow at work: "Mrs. Kellow's best efforts are made in the evening, and in darkness, save the light of the moonbeams on the keys of her piano." We are also assured that "she is happy in her inspirations and a sincere lover of music. All of her compositions

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show a decided talent and possess musical elements which are only to be found in the works of an artist. Mrs. Kellow's musical friends are confident of her success as a composer and predict for her a brilliant future."

Let us turn to the somewhat more extensive biography of W. T. Mullin on Page 41 (Mr. Mullin's photograph faces this page). Almost in the first line the author rewards our attention: "To him may be applied the simplest and grandest eulogy Shakespeare ever pronounced: 'He was a man.' " We are also informed that he was born of a cultured family, that his inherited nobility of character has been carefully fostered by a thorough education, and told that one finds in him the unusual combination of genius wedded to sound common sense and practical business capacity. His family moved to Colorado, Texas, while he was still a lad, and here his musical talent began to bud. "The inventive faculties of the small boy and the innate harmony of the musician combined to improvise a crude instrument which emitted the notes of the scale. Successful at drawing forth a concord of sweet sounds, he continued to experiment upon everything which would emit musical vibrations (even the pigs, I take it, did not escape). He consequently discovered the laws of vibrating chords before he had mastered the intricacies of



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the multiplication table. Yet, strange as it may seem, his musical education was neglected. A four months' course in piano instruction was interrupted and then resumed for two months more. Upon this meagre foundation rested his subsequent phenomenal progress." I pause to remind the astonished and breathless reader that even Mozart and Schubert, infant prodigies that they were, received more training than this.

I continue to quote: "At the age of thirteen he joined the Colorado (Texas) Cornet Band as a charter member. The youngest member of the band, he soon outstripped his comrades by virtue of his superior natural ability. His position was that of second tenor. Wearying of the monotony of playing, he determined to venture on solo work. The boy felt the impetus of restless power and the following incident illustrates his remarkable originality. Taking the piano score of a favourite melody, he transposed it within the compass of the second tenor. This feat evoked admiring applause because of his extreme youth and untrained abilities. The bandmaster remarked that elderly and experienced heads could hardly have accomplished this.

"From boyhood to manhood he has remained with the Colorado (Texas) Band as one of its most efficient members, composing in his leisure



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moments, marches, ragtime, waltzes, song and dance schottisches, etc. Of his many meritorious compositions only one has so far been given to the public: The West Texas Fair March, composed for and dedicated to the management of the West Texas Fair and Round-up. This institution holds its annual meetings at Abilene, Texas. There the march was played for the first time at their October 1899 meet with great success, and again at their September 1900 meet by the Stockman Band of Colorado, Texas, which has furnished music for the West Texas Fair during their 1899 and 1900 meetings. Mr. Mullin's position in the Stockman Band is that of euphonium soloist. He is a proficient performer upon all band instruments from cornet to tuba, including slide trombone, his favourites being the baritone and the trombone.

"He plays many stringed instruments, as well as the piano and organ. He is the proud possessor of a genuine Stradivarius violin—a family heirloom—which he naturally prizes beyond the intrinsic value. The feat of playing on several instruments at once presents no difficulty to him.

"This briefly sketches Mr. Mullin's life, character, and ability as a musician. His accompanying photograph reveals his superb physique. Personally he possesses charming, agreeable man-

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ners and Chesterfieldan courteousness, which vastly contributes to his popularity. Sincere devotion to his art has been rewarded by that elevating nobility of soul, which alone can penetrate the blue expanse of space and revel in the music of the spheres."

What more is there to say? I can only assure the reader that Mullin stands unique among all musicians, creative and interpretative, in being able to play the organ, many stringed instruments, and all the instruments in a brass band, several of them simultaneously (it would be interesting to learn which and how), after studying the piano for six months. I sincerely hope that the error he made in withholding all his compositions, save one, from the public, has been rectified.

Helen Kelsey Fox, like so many of our other talented men and women, has a European strain in her blood. On her mother's side she is a lineal descendant of a French nobleman and a German princess. Nevertheless, she continues to reside in Vermilion, Ohio. She is of a "decided poetic nature and lives in an atmosphere of her own. She dwells in a world of thought peopled by the creations of an active and lyric mentality." She is so imbued with the poetic spark that, as she expresses it, she "speaks in rhyme half the time."

John Z. Macdonald, strictly speaking, is not

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an American composer. He was born in Scotland and came to America in 1881 at the age of twenty-one, but as he is one of the very few composers since Nero to enter public political life <sup>1</sup> he well deserves a place in this collection. In 1890 he was elected city clerk of Brazil, Indiana, a position which he held for seven years. In 1898 he was elected treasurer of Clay County, Indiana. This county is Democratic "by between five and six hundred" but Mr. Macdonald was elected on the Republican ticket by a majority of one hundred and thirty-three. He was the only Republican elected. Among the best known of Mr. Macdonald's compositions is his famous Expansion Song, in which he predicted the fate of Aguinaldo. He has autograph letters, praising this song, from the late President McKinley, Colonel Roosevelt, General Harrison, Admiral Schley, John Philip Sousa, and other "eminent gentlemen."

Edward Dyer, born in Washington, was the son of a marble cutter who "helped to erect the U. S. Treasury, Patent Office, and Capitol. . . . In the majority of his compositions there is a tinge of sadness which appeals to his auditors. . . . Mr. Dyer never descends to coarseness or vulgarity in his productions; he writes pure, clean words, something that can be sung in

<sup>1</sup> Paderewski has since followed his example.

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the home, school, and on the stage to refined, respectable people."

We learn much of the study years of Mrs. Lucy L. Taggart: "From earliest childhood she received valuable musical instruction from her father (Mr. Longsdon) who, coming from England in 1835, purchased the first piano that came to Chicago, an elegant hand-carved instrument that is still treasured in the old home." Later, "she studied under Prof. C. E. Brown of Owego, N. Y., Prof. Heimburger of San Francisco, and Herr Chas. Goffrie. Mrs. Taggart was also for five years a pupil of Señor Arevalo, the famous guitar soloist of Los Angeles. . . . Mrs. Taggart has in preparation (1902) Methought he touched the strings, an idyl for piano in memory of the late Señor M. S. Arevalo."

David Weidley, born in Philadelphia, is the composer of the following songs, Old Spooney Spoopalay, Jennie Ree, Autumn Leaves, Hannah Glue, and Uncle Reuben and Aunt Lucinda. "He has done much to create and elevate a taste for music in the community where he resides and where he is known as 'Dave.' Even the little children call him 'Dave' as freely and innocently as those who have known him for years, and there can be no greater compliment for any man than that he is known and loved by the children.

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Mr. Weidley is by profession a sheet metal worker. He is a P. G. of the I. O. O. F., and a P. C. in the Knights of Pythias. He is not identified with any church, but loves and serves his fellow men."

In the biography of Delmer G. Palmer we are assured that "Versatility is a trait with which musical composers are not excessively burdened. There are few performers who can include The Moonlight Sonata and Schubert's Serenade with selections from The Merry-Go-Round, and do justice to the expression of each, much less would such adaptability be looked for among composers. As most rules have exceptions, in this there is one who stands in a class occupied by no one else, Mr. Delmer G. Palmer, the 'Green Mountain Composer,' who at present resides in Kansas City.

"As recently as 1899 Mr. Palmer wrote a song in the popular 'ragtime,' My Sweetheart is a Midnight Coon and almost in the same breath also wrote the heavy sacred solo, Christ in Gethsemane. The first is of the usual light order, characteristic of this class of music. The latter is as far removed to the contrary as comedy from tragedy. The 'coon' song entered the bubbling, effervescing cauldron of what is termed 'ragtime' music among the multitudinous others,



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and soon was seen peeping through at the surface among the lightest and most catchy. . . . The sacred solo found its level among the heavier in its class, and, if the term may be here applied, it was also a hit."

S. Duncan Baker, born August 25, 1855, still lives (1902) in the old family residence at Natchez, Mississippi. "In this house is located the den where he has spent many hours with his collection of banjos and pictures, and in writing for and playing on the instrument which he adopted as a favourite during its dark days (about 1871)." We learn that he composed an "artistic banjo solo," entitled *Memories of Farland*. "Had this production or its companion piece, *Thoughts of the Cadenza*, been written by an old master for some other instrument and later have been adapted by a modern composer to the banjo, either or both of them would have been pronounced classic, barring some slight defects in form."

I cannot stop to quote from the delightful reports of the lives and works of Albert Matson, George D. Tufts, D. O. Loy, Lavinia Pascoe Oblad, and forty or fifty other American singers, but it seems to me, Mencken, that I have submitted enough evidence to prove to you that the great book on American music has been written. Without one single mention of the names of Ho-



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ratio W. Parker, George W. Chadwick, Frederick Converse, or Henry Hadley, by a transference of the emphasis to the circle where it belongs, the author of this undying volume has answered your prayer.

*December 11, 1917.*

## *Music for the Movies*

Although it would appear that the moving-picture drama had opened up new worlds to the modern musician, no important composer, so far as I am aware, has as yet turned his attention to the writing of music for the films. If the cinema play is in its infancy, as certain enthusiasts would have us believe, then we may be sure that the day is not far distant when moving-picture scores will take their places on musicians' bookshelves alongside those occupied by operas, symphonies, masses, and string quartets. In the meantime, entirely ignorant of the truth (or oblivious to it, or merely helpless, as the case may be) that writing music for moving-pictures is a new art, which demands a new point of view, the musical directors of the picture theatres are struggling with the situation as best they may. Under the circumstances, it is remarkable, on the whole, how swiftly and how well the demand for music with the silent drama has been met. Certainly the quality of the music is on a level with, or even better than, the type of entertainment offered. Nevertheless, the directors have not squarely

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faced the issue: they still continue to try to force old wine into new bottles, arranging and rearranging melodies and harmonies contrived for quite other occasions and purposes. Even when scores have been written for pictures the result has not shown any imaginative advance over the arranged scores. It is curious that it seems to have occurred to no one that the moving-picture demands a *new* kind of music.

The composers, I should imagine, are only waiting to be asked to write it. Certainly none of them has ever displayed any hesitancy about composing incidental music for the spoken drama. Mendelssohn wrote strains for A Midsummer Night's Dream which seemed pledged to immortality until Granville Barker ignored them; the Wedding March is still in favour in Keokuk and Kankakee. Beethoven illustrated Goethe's Egmont; Sir Arthur Sullivan penned a score for The Tempest; Schubert was inspired to put down some of his most ravishing notes for a stupid comedy called Rosamunde; Grieg's Peer Gynt music is performed more often than the play. More recent examples of incidental music for dramas are Saint-Saëns's score for Brioux's La Foi, Mascagni's for The Eternal City, and Richard Strauss's for Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. Is it necessary to prolong the list? I have only mentioned, to be sure, a few obvious instances

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that would spring at once to any musician's mind, passing by the thousands upon thousands of scores devised by lesser composers for lesser plays. Of course, it has usually been the poetic drama (do we ever hear Shakespeare or Rostand without it?) which has seemed to call for incidental music, but, with more or less disastrous consequences, to be sure, it has accompanied the unfolding of many a "drawing-room" comedy, especially during the eighties.

On the whole, as a matter of fact, more films follow the general lines of *Lady Windermere's Fan* or *Peg o' My Heart* than those of poetic dramas such as *Cymbeline* or *La Samaritaine*. The case, however, is not analogous to that of the spoken drama. For, in motion-pictures, a poetic play sheds its poetry and becomes, like its neighbour, a skeleton of action. There is no conceivable distinction in the movies, beyond one created by preference, or taste, or the quality of the performance and the photography, between Dante's *Inferno* and a film in which the beloved Charlie Chaplin looms large.

When the first moving-picture was exposed on the screen it seems to have occurred at once to its projector that some kind of music must accompany its unreeling. The silence evidently appalled him.<sup>1</sup> A moving-picture is not unlike a

<sup>1</sup> In Chapter XIV of *The Art of the Moving Picture*, Vachel

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ballet in that it depends entirely upon action (it differs from a ballet in that the action is not necessarily rhythmic), and who ever heard of a ballet being performed without music? Sound certainly has its value in creating an atmosphere and in emphasizing the thrill of the moving-picture, especially when that sound is selected and coordinated. It may also serve to divert the attention. The musical directors of the motion-picture theatres have tried to meet this problem; that they have not so far been wholly successful is not entirely their fault.

It is no simple matter, for example, in a theatre in which the films are changed daily, a general rule even in the larger houses,<sup>1</sup> for a musician to arrange a satisfactory accompaniment for five thousand feet of action which may include anything from an earthquake in Cuba to a dinner in Park Lane, and it is scarcely possible, even if the distributors be so inclined, which they frequently are nowadays, to furnish a music score which will answer the purposes of bands of varying sizes, ranging from an upright piano, solo, to a full orchestra. As for the pictures without prearranged scores, the orchestra leaders and pianists must do the best they can for them.

Lindsay says: "The perfect photoplay gathering-place would have no sound but the hum of the conversing audience."

<sup>1</sup> This is no longer true.

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In some theatres, the chef d'orchestre strikes an attitude of total disrespect towards the picture. He makes up his musical program as if he were giving a concert, not at all with the view of effectively accompanying the action on the screen. In a theatre on Second Avenue in New York, for example, I have heard an orchestra play the whole of Beethoven's First Symphony as an accompaniment to Irene Fenwick's performance of *The Woman Next Door*. As the symphony came to an end before the picture, it was supplemented by Waldteufel's waltz, *Les Patineurs*. The result, in this particular instance, was neither altogether incongruous nor particularly displeasing, and it occurred to me that if one had to listen to music while the third act of *Hedda Gabler* were being enacted, one would prefer to hear something like Boccherini's celebrated minuet or a light Mozart melody rather than anything ostensibly contrived to suit the situation.

On the other hand, there are certain accompanists for pictures who remind one by their methods of the anxiety of Richard Strauss to describe every peacock and bean mentioned in any of his opera-books. If a garden is exposed on the screen, these players swing into *The flowers that bloom in the spring*; a love scene is the signal for *Un peu d'amour*; a religious episode suggests *The Rosary* to these ingenuous musi-



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cians; Japan brings a touch of Madama Butterfly; a proposal of marriage, O Promise me; and a farewell, Tosti's Good-bye! This expedient of appealing to the emotions through the intellect bears the stamp of approval, it may be admitted, of no less a composer than Richard Wagner.

Waiting the birth of authentic moving-picture music, which a new composer must rise to invent, the safest way (not necessarily the best) is the middle course, one method for this film, another for that. One of the difficulties which arises is the necessity of arranging a score for a theatre with a large band, where the leader must plan his accompaniment, or have it planned for him, for an entire picture before his men can play a note. Music cues must be definite: twenty bars of Alexander's Ragtime Band, seventeen of The Ride of the Valkyries, ten of Vissi d'arte, etc. An ingenious young man has discovered a way by which music and action may be synchronized. I feel the impulse to quote from the vivid report of his achievement, published in one of the motion-picture weekly journals: "Here was a man-sized job—how to measure the action of the picture to the musical score, so that they would both come out equal at every part of the picture, and would be so exact that any orchestra might take the score and follow the movement of the play with absolute correctness. It was a question pri-

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marily of mathematics, but even so, it was some time before a system of computation was devised and the undertaking gotten down to a certainty. As an illustration, on the opening night of one of the most notable photoplay productions now before the public, the orchestra, notwithstanding a three weeks' rehearsal, found at the conclusion of the picture that it was a page and a half behind the play's action in the musical setting." Then we learn that Frank Stadler of New York "provided the remedy for this condition of affairs. He remembered that Beethoven had overcome the difficulty of proper timing for his sonatas by a mechanical arrangement known as the metronome, invented by a friend of his." Mr. Stadler then began the measurement of a film with a metronome, a stenographer, and a watch. He quickly discovered that the film ran ten feet to every eight seconds, and he accordingly set the metronome for eight-second periods. "The stenographer made a note of the action of the picture each time the bell rang, with the result that when the entire picture had been run off Mr. Stadler had a complete record of the production. All that was necessary then was to select from the classics and the popular melodies the music which would give a suitable atmosphere and a harmonious accompaniment to the theme of the play, so

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synchronizing the music with the eight-second periods that every bar of it fitted the spirit of the many scores of scenes of the production."

The single man orchestra, the player of the upright piano, need not make so many preparatory gestures. He may with impunity, if he be of an inventive turn of mind or if his memory be good, improvise his score as the picture unreels itself for the first time before what may very well be his astonished vision; after that, he may vary his accompaniment, as the shows of the day progress, improving it here or there, or not, as the case may be, but keeping generally as near to his original performance as possible. He relies, naturally, on a generous use of rum-ti-tum, shivery passages (known to orchestra leaders as "agits," an abbreviation of *agitato*) to accompany moments of excitement. This music you will remember if you have ever attended a performance of a Lincoln J. Carter melodrama in which a train was wrecked, or a hero rescued from the teeth of a saw, or a heroine pursued by bloodhounds. Recently, in a moving-picture hall on Fourteenth Street in New York, I heard a pianist eke out a half-hour with similar poundings on two or three well-used chords, well-used even in the time of Haydn. The scenes represented the whole of a two-act opera, and the ambitious pianist was try-

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ing, with his three meagre chords, to give his audience the effect of singers, principals and chorus, and orchestra.

A certain periodical, devoted to the interests of the moving-picture industry, conducts a department as first aid to the musical leaders and pianists who figure at these shows. In a recent number the editor of this department gives it as his solemn opinion that musicians who read fiction are the best equipped to play for pictures. Then, with an almost tragic parenthesis, he continues: "Reading fiction is the last diversion that the average musician will follow. He feels that all the necessary romance is to be found in his music." Facts are dead, says this editor in substance, but fiction is living and should make you weep. When you cry, all that remains for you to do is to think of a tune which will go hand in hand with the cause of your tears; this will serve you later when a similar scene occurs on the silver sheets.

There is one tune which every capable moving-picture pianist has discovered will fit any Keystone picture. For the benefit of the uninitiated I may state that in the Keystone farces some one gets kicked or knocked down or spat upon several times in almost every scene. I am ignorant of the title of this tune, but wherever Keystone pictures are shown, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Grand

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Rapids, Michigan, Chicago, and even New York, I have heard it. When a character falls into the water, as at least ten of them invariably do, the pianist may vary the monotony of the melody by sitting on the piano or upsetting a chair. In one theatre I have known him to cause glass to be shattered behind the screen. How Marinetti would like that!

However, the day of this sort of thing is rapidly approaching its conclusion, I venture to prophesy. A few of the firms are already issuing arranged music scores for their productions. I might note in passing the score which accompanied Geraldine Farrar's screen performance of *Carmen*, largely selected from the music of Bizet's opera, and Victor Herbert's original score for *The Fall of a Nation*, a score which does not take full advantage of the new technique of the cinema drama. It will not be long before an enterprising director engages an enterprising musician to compose music for a picture. For the same reason<sup>1</sup> that d'Annunzio, very early in the career of the moving-picture, wrote a scenario for a film, I should not be surprised to learn that Richard Strauss was under contract to construct an accompaniment to a screened drama. It will be very loud music and it will require a band of one hundred and forty-three men to interpret it.

<sup>1</sup>§.



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Probably Strauss himself will conduct the first performance; later, excerpts will be played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the critics will say, in spite of Philip Hale's diverting program notes, that this music should never be performed save in conjunction with the picture for which it was written. Mascagni is another composer who should find an excellent field for his talent in writing tone-poems for pictures, although he would contrive nothing more daring than a well-arranged series of illustrative melodies.

But put Igor Stravinsky, or some other modern genius, to work on this problem and see what happens! The composer of the future should revel in the opportunity the moving-picture affords him to create a new form. This form differs from that of the incidental music for a play in that the flow of tone may be continuous and in that one never need soften the accompaniment in order that the voices may be heard; it differs from the music for a ballet in that the scene changes constantly; consequently, time-signatures, mood, and key, must be as constantly shifting. The swift flash from scene to scene, the cut-back, the necessary rapidity of the action, all these are adapted to inspire the future composer to brilliant effort: a tinkle of this and a snatch of that, without working-out or development; illustra-



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tion, comment, piquant or serious, that's what the new film music should be. The ultimate moving-picture score will be something more than a sentimental accompaniment.

*November 10, 1915.*

## *The Importance of Electrical Picture Concerts*

In a paper entitled *Music for Museums*<sup>1</sup> I once complained of the unvaried fare offered to us by the program makers of the symphony concerts, a monotonous round of the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms, the overtures of Weber, and excerpts from Wagner's music dramas. A law should be enacted restricting orchestral organizations to one Beethoven symphony a season, I asserted, and I berated the conductors for their tendency to give the old masters places that should be reserved, at least on occasion, for the younger generation. My remarks seem to have been read and taken seriously, unless it can be supposed that the conductors themselves have seen the error of their ways, for during the current season (1916-17) we have observed Mr. Damrosch and Mr. Stransky (at least insofar as he has been able to do so without cracking the conditions of the famous Pulitzer will, which stipulates that the music of Beethoven, Liszt, and Wagner shall be frequently performed at the

<sup>1</sup> In a wretched book called *Music After the Great War*.

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concerts of the Philharmonic Society) vying with one another in their effort to discover unperformed works in dusty attics or on the shelves of the music shops and the libraries, and in their desire to give early hearings to new music by modern composers. Up to date, to be sure, they have ignored a good many compositions that we might conceivably listen to with pleasure, but they have provided us with specimens previously unproduced, at least in these benighted parts, of the art of Haydn and Mozart; Richard Strauss's long-buried *Macbeth* has been exhumed and the new and still-born *Alpine Symphony* has been played; a suite from Stravinsky's earliest ballet, *l'Oiseau de feu*, and several movements of a symphony by Zandonai have been added to the repertory of the concert room; and d'Indy's *Istar*, which we have long prayed for, has been revived, together with a more ancient treasure, Raff's *Lenore Symphony*, once as popular as Tchaikovsky's *Sixth*. Now these are steps, tentative, to be sure, in the right direction, and although some of us, at the cost of burning in hell, would refuse to hear a good deal of this music twice, it is certainly pleasanter to hear it once than to listen year after year to the standbys and battle horses of the ordinary concert season, a state of affairs which forces me to cry out with Shakespeare's duke, "Enough; no more; 'tis not so sweet now

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as it was before." Dr. Muck in Boston does not agree with me. He even brings his men to New York to perform Schumann's Rhenish Symphony and Rimsky-Korsakoff's Scheherazade and calls the result a program. This strikes me as insolence, but it is an efficient kind of insolence. The concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall are always sold out, and Dr. Muck could, if he so desired (I am expecting something of the sort), make up a program consisting of the Beautiful Blue Danube waltz and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony without any appreciable effect on the box office.

There is, of course, the necessity (at least it is so regarded) of educating the children. They must, according to the accepted theory of education, hear what has been done before they hear what is being done, but it does not seem necessary on this account to convert the best orchestra in America (one of the best anywhere) into a primary school. It is disheartening to realize, as some of us must, that this band, which one might hope to find exploiting new tonal combinations for our delectation, is fast becoming a museum where celebrated old bits of tune may be inspected and reheard.

Hope has appeared, however, in an unexpected quarter. The extreme popularity of the cinema theatres was not to be guessed at a few

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seasons ago, nor could any of us have foretold that symphony orchestras of a size and quality which compare more than favourably with some of our established organizations would dispense sweet melody in these temples of amusement from late morning until midnight. The accompaniment to the pictures is scarcely, as yet, a matter for congratulation, as I have indicated in *Music for the Movies*, but the accompaniment to the pictures is only a small part of the present duty of a band in a theatre devoted to the electrical drama. As a matter of fact, a concert at a moving-picture show is now often a much more serious affair than an old Theodore Thomas popular program. Symphonies, concertos, rhapsodies, arias, overtures (from those of Dichter und Bauer and Guillaume Tell to those of Lohengrin and Susannens Geheimnis), all figure in the scheme. At one of these theatres more music is performed in one day than an assiduous concert-goer could hope to hear in three days in the concert halls. The duration of a symphony concert is about two hours, including a fifteen-minute intermission, that of a song recital about an hour and a half, but in a moving-picture theatre an orchestra, or an organ, or a piano furnishes a pretty continuous flow of melody from eleven A. M. to eleven P. M. In the large houses soloists are sandwiched in between the films; sometimes



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these soloists are better performers than those one hears under more holy auspices; frequently they are identical. The violinists play Kreisler, the Beethoven Romances, and pieces by Drdla, Vieuxtemps, de Bériot, Paganini, and Mendelssohn. Yes, the first movement of the E minor concerto figures occasionally in moving-picture theatre concert programs, where, at the present day, I am inclined to believe it belongs.

This might be regarded as poetic justice. In any case, it is a fact, and a fact that cannot be ignored. It strikes me that from this time on we should hear precious little about "concerts for young people," "educational concerts," "popular concerts," and the like. In the circumstances, the directors of our best orchestras can invent no flimsy excuse for playing too much Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, and Wagner, or any of the works of Grieg, Liszt, Mendelssohn, and Tchaikovsky. Brahms, by the peculiar veils of his art, seems, at the moment, to be protected from the cinema halls, although violinists occasionally perform his Gipsy Dances there, and almost any day I expect to hear some deep-voiced contralto sing the Sapphische Ode or the Vergebliches Ständchen between Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin.

The importance of the musical accompaniment to the films and of the intermediate concert num-

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bers is obviously recognized by the managers of such theatres as the Strand and the Rialto. The close attention with which the music is followed and the very violent applause which congratulates each performer, often exacting recall numbers, are ready proofs of the pleasure experienced by the customers. What is known as cheap music is seldom played. In fact, there is so much of an air of the concert hall about these performances that I am afraid they would bore me even if the music were less familiar to my ears. I should prefer, on these occasions, more informality, more excursions into the rhythmic realms conjured up for us by Louis Hirsch and Irving Berlin. Nothing of the sort need be hoped for. The music performed, and desired by the audiences, is what is known to the less tone-educated multitudes as "classic."

Any intelligent child, therefore, with a little direction from a musical elder, could pick up the routine of the concert and opera world in a ten weeks' course at the Rialto or the Strand. Such unavoidable songs as the Prologue to *Pagliacci*, the subsequent tenor lament from the same opera, all three of *Dalila's* airs, the waltz from *La Boheme*, the prayer from *Tosca*, *Celeste Aida*, *Cielo e mar*, *O Paradis*, *Danny Deever*, *Les Filles de Cadix*, the *Habanera* from *Carmen*, *Dich, theure Halle*, *The Two Grenadiers*, *Dost*

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thou know that fair land? from Mignon, the Jewel Waltz from Faust, the Page's Song from Les Huguenots, the Miserere, the Prayer from Cavalleria Rusticana, the Bach-Gounod Ave Maria, Depuis le jour from Louise, the Gavotte from Manon, Pleurez mes yeux from Le Cid, the Drinking Song from La Traviata, the Ave Maria from Otello, Plus grand dans son obscurité from Gounod's La Reine de Saba, and Che faro senza Euridice? will be as familiar to his little ears as Dixie or the stolen strains of America.

In like manner he will accustom himself to the delights of Kreisler's Caprice Viennois and Tambourin Chinois, Beethoven's two violin Romances, the Bach air arranged for the G string, the Preislid from Die Meistersinger, arranged for violin by Wilhelmj, Pierné's Sérénade, Dvořák's Humoresque. . . . As for the concert repertory, he will hear the overtures to Euryanthe and Oberon, Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Tannhäuser, Sakuntala, Semiramide, and such concert pieces and tone-poems as the Danse Macabre, Phaëton, Mephistowaltzer, Les Préludes, the orchestrated rhapsodies of Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakoff's Spanish Caprice, the Arlésienne Suite, the Peer Gynt Suite, a number of Strauss waltzes, Massenet's Elégie, the entr'actes from The Jewels of the Madonna, certain ballet airs of Gluck, etc.

## *Electrical Picture Concerts*

Moreover, he will not be cognizant of the fact that he is acquiring what is known as a "musical education" (the knowledge of and the ability to hum tunes from one-fifth of the aforementioned numbers would generally be considered to constitute a musical education). Heaven forbid that such an idea be put into his head! The moving-picture concerts, like the pictures themselves, should be classified as amusements. Only, having gone this far, why not go a little farther? If one must become acquainted with Wagner in the concert hall at all, why not in the electrical picture theatre? There are no excerpts in the present concert repertory that could not well be played there; the Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung*, the Lohengrin prelude, the Good Friday Spell from *Parsifal*, the Ride of the Valkyries, and all the rest of them, should be doled out, between the actualities and the feature film, to the youngsters seeking tone-knowledge and to those oldsters who enjoy hearing them divorced from the text and the stage action. And while you can scarcely expect Dr. Muck or Mr. Damrosch to pay Beethoven the compliment of giving him up altogether for the time being, his music might be played less by the symphony organizations in view of the hearings it would receive at the hands of the moving-picture societies. The first two symphonies, at

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any rate, might be left to their mercies. Mendelssohn, as a symphonist, assuredly should be tendered to their keeping . . . Grieg and Liszt, for the most part . . . Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, and Massenet . . . a good deal of Saint-Saëns . . . Glazunoff and Elgar, certainly Elgar, if the moving-picture audiences would permit it. There is another field for the Strand Philharmonic Society, for the band of the Academy of Music: the exploitation of the American composer <sup>1</sup> who, one complains, never gets his chance at a hearing. The conductors of these concerts might introduce new music by George W. Chadwick, Henry Hadley, Arthur Farwell, Edgar Stillman Kelley, and Ernest Schelling.

If anything so nearly pleasant as this happens in the musical world (and there are, as I stated at the beginning of this paper, certain indications that it is happening), think of the space there would be on the programs of our august societies for the new music our curious ears are aching to hear! Think of the possible resurrections of works by Mozart, Haydn, and César Franck that one never does hear. Perhaps Debussy's *La Mer*, *Nocturnes*, and *Images* (*Ibéria*, *Gigue*, and *Rondes de Printemps*), all too infrequently performed, would become more familiar. I should like to listen at least once to Albéniz's

<sup>1</sup> This actually happened. See page 71.



## *Electrical Picture Concerts*

Catalonia and Turina's *La Procesión del Rocio*, which Debussy has compared to a luminous fresco, which reminds me that Spanish music altogether is unknown in our concert halls. We might hear more Sibelius and Musorgsky . . . Borodin . . . John Carpenter . . . Schoenberg's *Five Pieces* . . . Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*.<sup>1</sup> Why not even *Petrouchka*? Ornstein's *The Fog*, Ravel, Dukas (has *La Péri* been played here?), d'Indy, Korngold . . .

*December 7, 1916.*

<sup>1</sup> It is an interesting fact that, during the seven years which have elapsed since I wrote this paper, nearly, if not quite all of the pieces I mentioned have been performed in New York. It was not until January 1924, however, that Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*, which I heard in Paris in 1913, was given a hearing in New York.

## *Movies for Program Notes*

Five years ago in an oracular mood, I ventured to prophesy that moving-picture entertainments would soon be listed with symphony concerts. Probably, at the time, I wore the mask of Cassandra and nobody believed me. Nevertheless, my sapient prognostications have been amply fulfilled. No great composer, to be sure, has yet constructed a score to fit the flash-backs and double exposures of Bebe Daniels, but that will come later. Indeed, I am willing to predict that, within the next ten years, Igor Stravinsky will set a Chaplin film to music. Why not? In the meantime, while they gaze on Gloria Swanson in the arms of Wallace Reid, picture patrons are regaled with snippets of Verdi and Friml. Mary Pickford cutifies to a bar or two of Schubert, followed by a bar or two of Jerome Kern, while Norma Talmadge cavorts to remnants of Grieg and Offenbach. At the beginning of the show, and between the news and feature films, a more or less competent "symphony orchestra" of approximately ninety-five men (in the larger houses) performs music that hitherto could only

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be heard in Carnegie Hall or the Opera House. Within a few months, indeed, at these cinema concerts, I have listened to the overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide*, Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March*, Dvořák's *Carneval* overture, the *andante con moto* from Schubert's C major Symphony, Dukas's *l'Apprenti-sorcier*, the first movement of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, the overture to *Oberon*, the *March* from the *Symphonie Pathétique*, Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio Italien*, and even the *vorspiel* to *Die Meistersinger*!<sup>1</sup> In 1920, the direction of the Rialto Theatre in New York went so far as to offer a prize of \$500 for the best orchestral composition submitted by an American. Among the judges in this contest were Artur Bodanzky, Victor Herbert, Carl Deis, and O. G. Sonneck. Eighty-five compositions were entered in this competition and the gold was awarded to Mortimer Wilson of Iowa for his *New Orleans* overture. This work was performed at the Rialto during the week of October 24, 1920. The week of December 19, Maurice Baron's *Ouverture Triomphale*, the second choice of the judges, was given a hearing. I listened to both of these numbers and can

<sup>1</sup> Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, which even symphony society audiences found heavy ten years ago, was performed at the Capitol Theatre in New York during November, 1922. A year later, lunching at the Ritz-Carlton, I became aware that the orchestra was playing Debussy's *l'Après-midi d'un faune*.

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testify that they were no better and no worse than might have been expected.

Soloists appear at these moving-picture concerts. I have heard them sing the Cardinal's air from *La Juive*, *Son lo spirito che nega* from *Mefistofele*, *Una voce poco fà*, *Il est doux, il est bon* from *Hérodiade*, and the *Polacca* from *Mignon*. I have heard them play Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, Liszt's piano concerto in E flat, Saint-Saëns's *Le Cygne*, Tchaikovsky's B flat minor piano concerto, Grieg's piano concerto, and Bruch's arrangement for cello of the *Kol Nidrei*. These soloists are by no means all amateurs or broken-down opera singers. The first violin of the band in one of the New York electrical picture houses, who frequently appeared there in the rôle of virtuoso, was engaged by the Chicago Orchestra to fill a similar chair, and Percy Grainger, himself, played one week at the Capitol Theatre. It takes no great stretch of the imagination to foresee that, in the not too far-distant future, Pablo Casals, Harold Bauer, Elena Gerhardt, Eva Gauthier, and, probably, even Geraldine Farrar, will have hearings under these happy auspices.

There is no doubt in my mind, as a matter of fact, that the cut and dried Carnegie Hall type of concert, formal and forbidding, is bound to disappear in favour of this warmer and more

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informal mode of entertainment, unless the entrepreneurs of the symphony societies take steps to meet this new and increasingly formidable form of competition. Percy Grainger, playing a Steinway grand in a darkened auditorium, in a highly decorative set arranged by John Wenger, with an amber light focused on his aureole of golden hair, is a vastly more effective performer than the Percy Grainger who plays on the bare stage of Carnegie Hall, with the house and its occupants brightly illuminated. Anybody who heard him at the Capitol Theatre will support me in this categorical statement. It must also be taken into consideration that the average customer cannot detect the difference between a performance of Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Scheherazade* by the Rivoli Orchestra and one by the Boston Symphony. Naturally he pays his money where he can hear the *Scheherazade* and see W. S. Hart on the same bill.

The backers and angels of the various symphony organizations may as well make up their minds that they will be compelled to face this new music. Now, observing how much effect the cinema palaces have made by combining music with pictures, it has occurred to me to wonder why some enterprising Henry Lee Higginson or Harry Harkness Flagler has not hit upon the idea of combining pictures with music. The



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ways in which this suggestion might be turned to advantage, without loss of dignity, are manifold. Let our present concern be a consideration of pictures as an excellent substitute for program notes.

The obvious first use of the films in this capacity would have an educational value. For example, one reads in the program books that the first theme of Marecipio's Third Symphony is a tender melody in G flat minor played by the flute and the first violins. To the layman, it will be readily admitted, this statement conveys nothing whatever. I doubt, indeed, if the majority of the auditors who attend symphony concerts can distinguish the difference between a flute and a violin. Certainly, when glockenspiel, tympani, celesta, bassoon, clarinet, and oboe are concerned, the tired business man has not the faintest conception of how they look or sound. I am acquainted with a lawyer, a constant attendant of symphony concerts for the past ten years, who was amazed to discover recently that the bassoon was a wind instrument. He had always confused it with the double-bass. When this fellow read descriptions of various themes he must have been very much puzzled. My proposition would discourage such confusion. Simply, it is for the title of a theme to be flashed on the screen at the moment it is announced in the orchestra. Thus:

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### FIRST THEME

A little later this will be followed by another title:

### SECOND THEME

Then will come a proclamation of the working-out section, with indications here and there of the uses of the various themes. Still later, the recapitulation will be published, and the coda, if there be one. The performance may be preluded by general remarks about the composer and such particularizations regarding the symphony as may be deemed pertinent. If this course be rigorously pursued throughout the season, by the first of April, every constant concert-goer may be expected to know at least as much about the sonata form as I do.

It does not seem necessary to dwell at length on the advantages that will ensue from a resort to this simple device. Briefly, however, the hearer will be put into possession of accurate information at the time when he most needs it and when, therefore, it will make its maximum effect; there will be no rustling of programs to disturb honest listeners; above all, the requirements of the electrical machine will demand the darkening of the auditorium, an immense advantage. There is, to be sure, no apparent reason why the auditorium should not be darkened in any case.

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The fact remains, however, that it never is. Seemingly, it never will be until there springs up a sufficiently compelling motive for this desirable procedure.

A second and more novel use of titles may be made under circumstances in which program notes are of small avail. I refer to quotations. Authors frequently quote from other authors. They indicate these borrowings either by inverted commas or by a reference to the original book or its writer. There is no hint of plagiarism in this line of conduct, which is recognized and regular. On the other hand, a composer, who quotes, consciously and intentionally, from another composer, is in danger of being misunderstood. He can, to be sure, label his intention in the printed score. When Mélisande speaks in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, Dukas cites a phrase from Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In the book of the lyric drama this fact is noted. In performance, however, it cannot be noted. In this particular instance, with Mélisande singing on the stage, Dukas's intention is fairly obvious. Suppose, however, that the composer of a symphony wishes to quote a few bars from Beethoven for some reason of emphasis or irony. How can he indicate this to his auditors? The fact is that he cannot indicate it. He may mention his obligation in the published score, and the conductor

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who performs the work may be aware of it, but, even if it be acknowledged in the program notes, the passage cannot be denoted with exactitude. Moreover, the composer cannot depend on every auditor reading these notes; furthermore, many concerts are given without any notes at all. His purpose, therefore, is liable to misconstruction. My plan, then, is for a title to be flashed on the screen at the exact moment the quotation is being performed, something like this:

### THIS PHRASE IS QUOTED FROM PURCELL'S DIDO AND ÆNEAS

There is a passage in Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* in which the composer cites themes from his own earlier works. By means of this simple device, each of these quotations (I believe there are twenty-three) could be distinctively labelled.

But the third and most important possible use of the electrical pictures in connection with symphony concerts carries us much further than the mere employment of titles: I think it would be an excellent idea to illustrate symphonic poems, all program music, indeed, by appropriate accompanying action on the screen.<sup>1</sup> This expedient

<sup>1</sup> In the matter of synchronization there are technical difficulties to be overcome, but I leave these to the chefs d'orchestres and the moving-picture producers.

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would provide a concert with almost as many moving-pictures as are presented in an evening at a cinema theatre, for it is well to realize that eight-tenths of the music played at modern concerts is program music. Let me offer a concrete example. When an orchestra plays Dukas's *l'Apprenti-sorcier*, it is the custom to print Goethe's verses, on which the tone-poem is founded, in the program books. Why not, instead, cause a picture to be taken which will synchronize exactly with the music, and run off this picture whenever and wherever the music is performed? A roll of films, indeed, should be sold with each score. Now, when the theme of the broomstick demon, roused to fetch water by the inquisitive apprentice, is heard in the orchestra, the stick will rise on the screen and go through the motions of bearing pails of water into the laboratory of the sorcerer until the room is flooded. In vain the apprentice begs him to desist, for, although the lad has puzzled out the incantation necessary to summon the spirit, he has neglected to acquaint himself with the counter-charm essential to dispel the disturbing presence. This magic broom, pouring out pails of water, could be cleverly counterfeited on the silver sheets, and, I think that the music performed before this appropriate action would make treble the ordinary effect.



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Just here, some conservative confederate veteran or Presbyterian music critic from Joliet will rise to confront me with the dictum that music which depends upon another art is not music at all. I will smite this churl right lustily with a blow which he will remember all his days. What he says is, perhaps, true—I neither affirm nor deny it—but granted that such a phenomenon as program music exists—and any honest concert-goer will testify to the truth of my earlier assertion that eight-tenths of all the music performed at contemporary symphony concerts is program music—it is certainly preferable that this program be enacted before the eyes than that it be presented as reading matter. There is, I believe, no room for argument here. The symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms, and a few others, pure music, so-called, should be played with titles on special educational occasions, but program music should invariably be performed to pictorial accompaniment. I am not quite sure but that even Beethoven's Sixth and Seventh Symphonies should be included in this class.

Berlioz's mad, transcendental Fantastic Symphony, presented in the customary manner, is, it must be admitted, a colossal bore, but, performed with cinema decorations, the opium dream of the young musician, the brilliant ball, the pastoral scene in the fields, the ghoulish

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march to the scaffold, and the concluding Walpurgisnacht scene, the witches' sabbath, with its revels of two-horned goats, mephitic necromancers, and writhing pythonesses, would be another matter. Nijinsky and his Russian nymphs should film *l'Après-midi d'un faune*, as they danced it. The Russians might also give their effulgent interpretation of Balakireff's *Thamar*. Debussy's *La Mer* is a superb movie subject, and so is César Franck's *Le Chasseur Maudit*. In Saint-Saëns's *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, I see Francis X. Bushman as the subjugated Hercules spinning for Theda Bara as Omphale. Phaëton would be more difficult to photograph, but the *Danse Macabre*<sup>1</sup> would be easy. Wagner, of course, when performed in concert, should be filmed. During a rendering of the overture to *Tannhäuser*, one should see a vision of the Venusberg and the march of the pilgrims. To illustrate the march from *Götterdämmerung*, the moon should shine on the cortège of Siegfried, as the body of the hero is borne slowly through the mountain passes. The picture illustrating the

<sup>1</sup> In 1922, this was actually done under the direction of Dudley Murphy, with Adolf Bolm, Ruth Page, and Olin Howland as the pantomimists. I saw and heard a performance at the Rialto Theatre in New York during the week of July 23, 1922. I have been informed that Mr. Murphy arranged a similar picturization of *l'Après-midi d'un faune*, but I did not see this.

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prelude to *Tristan*, however, could only be exhibited privately before the Society of the Friends of Music. The State Board of Censors would certainly issue no permit for public showings of this film at Carnegie Hall.

The music of Richard Strauss, all of it, bawls for illustration. How true this is, one realizes completely when one listens to his operas. Every bar in *Salome* is accentuated by the stage action: the sombre piety of John, the sensuality of the Princess of Judea, the ribaldry of Herod, the shrieking peacocks, and the raucous Jews. Think of the effect the symphonic poems would make when visualized! *Aus Italien*, with views of the Campagna, the ruins of Rome, the shores of Sorrento, concluding with a wild Neapolitan tarantella; *Till Eulenspiegel*, for which Nijinsky would again be requisitioned; *Don Juan*, probably another private picture. *Macbeth* and *Don Quixote*, never very successful when presented as pure music, would benefit especially by this treatment. Even the celebrated episode of the sheep would at last be clear.

But the particular Strauss works I desire to see filmed are the *Sinfonia Domestica* and *Ein Heldenleben*. Richard, as the hero of these autobiographical compositions, must be asked to assume the leading rôle in both productions. In the first, he must be assisted by his wife and a

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baby; probably his own son has grown too big to play his own part.<sup>1</sup> In the second, I look forward with particular interest to a glimpse of the battle with the critics. This section of the film, I think, will have to be retaken in every country in which the symphonic poem is played. Certainly, I have no great curiosity to see Strauss in combat with the German Spanuths, Weissmanns, Istels, and Riemanns. Let us inveigle the composer to Fort Lee with our local Sarceys. Let us see Papa Krehbiel heaving a brick at him, while Strauss retaliates with his booted toe in Papa Krehbiel's tenderest spot. Let us watch Mr. Finck valiantly climbing a hill, bearing over his shoulder a placard with the device:

JOHANN NOT RICHARD!

and Strauss putting him to route amidst utter cacophony. At the close of this episode I see Henry Theophilus in a heap at the foot of the hill, woefully nursing a bruised shin. The combat with Henderson should be a glove match in the ring.

These are merely a few suggestions, not too idle, I hope, which an enterprising conductor with a little money would do well to carry out. The idea, of course, is capable of being stretched to

<sup>1</sup> He was recently married (1924)!

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infinitude. But the first man who accepts even these few hints merely at their face value will no longer have to worry about a deficit at the end of the season, no longer have to struggle with the recalcitrant and ignorant ladies who form his board and attempt to dictate his programs. Without the aid of Fritz Kreisler or Frau Schumann-Heink, he can always fill his house, and the hieroglyphics on the front door will be changed from S. O. S. to S. R. O.

*October 18, 1921.*



## *The New Art of the Singer*

The art of vocalization is retarding the advance of the modern music drama. This is a simple statement of a fact although, doubtless, you are as accustomed as I am to hearing it expressed à rebours. How many times have I read that the art of singing is in its decadence, that soon there would not be one artist left fitted to deliver vocal music in public! The Earl of Mount Edgcumbe wrote something of the sort in 1825, for he found the great Catalani but a sorry travesty of his early favourites, Pacchierotti and Banti. I protest against this misconception. Any one who asserts that there are laws which govern singing, physical, scientific laws, must pay court to other ears than mine. For twenty years I have heard this same man shouting in the marketplace that a piece without action was not a play (usually the drama he referred to had more real action than that which decorates the progress of Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model), that a composition without melody (meaning a creation by Richard Wagner, Robert Franz, or even Edvard Grieg) was not

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music, and that verse without rhyme was not poetry. This same type of brilliant mind will go on to aver (forgetting the Scot and the Greek) that men who wear skirts are not men, and that women who smoke cigars are not women; indeed, he will not hesitate to settle a score of other problems in so silly a manner that a ten year old, half-witted schoolboy, after three minutes light thinking, could be depended upon to do better.

The rules for the art of singing, laid down in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have become obsolete. How could it be otherwise? They were contrived to fit a certain style of composition. We have but the briefest knowledge, indeed, of how people sang before 1700, although records exist praising the performances of Archilei and others. If a different standard of vocalization existed before 1600 there appears to be no sound reason why a different standard should not exist after 1917. As a matter of fact, maugre much authoritative opinion to the contrary, a different standard does exist. In certain respects the change in tradition is taken for granted. We do not, for example, expect to hear male sopranos at the opera. The Earl of Mount Edgcumbe admired this artificial form of voice almost to the exclusion of all others. His favourite singer, Pacchierotti, was a male so-

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prano. But other breaks have been made with tradition, breaks which are not yet taken for granted. When you find that all but one or two singers in every opera house in the world are ignoring the rules in one way or another you may be certain, despite the protests of the professors, that the rules are dead. Their excuse has disappeared and they remain only as dead commandments framed to fit an old religion.

In Handel's day a singer was accustomed to stand in one spot on the stage and sing; nothing else was required of him. He was not asked to walk about or to act; even expression in his singing was limited to pathos. The singers of this period, Nicolini, Senesino, Cuzzoni, Faustina, Caffarelli, Farinelli, Carestini, Gizziello, and Pacchierotti, devoted their study years to the preparation of their voices for the display of a definite variety of florid music. They had nothing else to learn. As a consequence, they were expected to be particularly efficient. Porpora, Caffarelli's teacher, is said to have devoted six years to the instruction of his pupil before he sent him forth to be "the greatest singer in the world." Contemporary critics appear to have been highly pleased with the result, but there is some excuse for H. T. Finck's impatience, expressed in *Songs and Song Writers*: "The favourites of the eighteenth century Italian au-

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diences were artificial male sopranos, like Farinelli, who was frantically applauded for such circus tricks as beating a trumpeter in holding on to a note, or racing with an orchestra and getting ahead of it; or Caffarelli, who entertained his audiences by singing, *in one breath*, a chromatic chain of trills up and down two octaves. Caffarelli was a pupil of the famous vocal teacher, Porpora, who wrote operas consisting chiefly of monotonous successions of florid arias resembling the music that is now written for flutes and violins." All very well for the day, no doubt, but could Cuzzoni sing Isolde? Could Faustina sing Mélisande? And what modern rôles would be allotted to the Julian Eltinges of the eighteenth century?

When composers began to set dramatic texts to music, trouble immediately appeared in the doorway. The coevals of Sophie Arnould, the "creator" of *Iphigénie en Aulide*, are agreed that she was greater as an actress than she was as a singer. David Garrick pronounced her a finer actress than Clairon. From that hour to the present there has continued to rage a triangular conflict between critic, composer, and singer, which, up to date, it must be admitted, has been consistently won by the academic pundits, for, although the singer has struggled, she has generally bent under the blows of the critical knout,

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thereby holding the music drama more or less in the state it was in a hundred years ago (every critic and almost every composer will tell you that any modern opera can be sung according to the laws of *bel canto*, and enough singers exist, unfortunately, to justify this assertion), save that the music is not so well sung, according to the old standards, as it was then. No singer has possessed enough courage to entirely defy tradition, to refuse to study with a teacher, to embody her own natural ideas in the performance of music, to found a new school . . . but there have been many rebels.

The operas of Mozart, Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini, on the whole, do not demand great histrionic exertion from their interpreters and for a time singers trained in the old Handelian tradition met every requirement of these composers and their audiences. If more action were demanded than in Handel's day, the newer music, in compensation, was easier to sing. Nevertheless, early in the nineteenth century we observe that those artists who, pushing on to the new technique, strove to be actors as well as singers lost something of the old vocal facility. I need only speak of Ronconi and Mme. Pasta. The lady was admittedly the greatest lyric artist of her day, although it is recorded that her slips from true intonation were frequent. When she



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could no longer command a steady tone, the beaux restes of her art and her authoritative style caused Pauline Viardot, who was hearing her then for the first time, to burst into tears. Ronconi's voice, according to Chorley, barely exceeded an octave; it was weak and habitually out of tune. This baritone was not gifted with vocal agility and he was monotonous in his use of ornament. Nevertheless, Chorley asserts that Ronconi afforded him more pleasure than almost any other singer he had ever heard in the theatre! If this critic did not grasp this opportunity to point the way to the future, on another occasion he had a faint glimmering of the coming revolution: "There might, there *should* be yet, a new Medea as an opera. Nothing can be grander, more antique, more Greek, than Cherubini's setting of the 'grand fiendish part' (to quote the words of Mrs Siddons on Lady Macbeth). But, as music, it becomes simply impossible to be executed, so frightful is the strain on the energies of her who is to represent the heroine. Compared with this character, Beethoven's Leonora, Weber's Euryanthe, are only so much child's play." This is topsy-turvy reasoning, of course, but at the same time it is suggestive.

The modern orchestra dug a deeper breach between the two schools. Wagner called upon the singer to express powerful emotion, passionate

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feeling, over a great wave of sound, nay, in many instances, *against* a great wave of sound.<sup>1</sup> It is small occasion for wonder that singers began to bark. They very nearly expired, indeed, under the strain of trying successfully to mingle Porpora and passion. According to W. F. Apthorp, Max Alvary once said that, considering the emotional intensity of music and situations, the constant co-operation of the surging orchestra, and, most of all, the unconquerable feeling of the reality of it all, it was a wonder that singing actors did not go stark mad, before the very faces of the audience, in parts like Tristan or Siegfried. The critics, in this new situation, were consistently inexorable; they stood by their guns. There was but one way to sing the new music and that was the way of Bernacchi and Pistocchi. In time, by dint of persevering, talking night and day, writing day and night, they convinced the singer. The music drama developed, but the singer was held in his place. Some artists, great geniuses, of course (for example, Jean de Reszke

<sup>1</sup> It is significant, in this connection, that Wagner himself admitted that it was a singer, Mme. Schroeder-Devrient, who revealed to him the possibilities of dramatic singing. He boasted that he was the only one to learn the lesson. "She was the first artist," writes H. T. Finck, "who fully realized the fact that in a dramatic opera there may be situations where *characteristic* singing is of more importance than *beautiful* singing."

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and Lilli Lehmann) made the compromise successfully, but they rendered the further progress of the composer more difficult thereby; music remained merely pretty. The successors of these supple singers even learned to sing Richard Strauss with broad cantilena effects. As for Puccini! At a performance of *Madama Butterfly* a Japanese once demanded why the singers were producing those nice round tones in moments of passion; why not ugly sounds?

Will any composer arise with the courage to write an opera which *cannot* be sung? Stravinsky came very near to achieving this happy result in *The Nightingale*, but I am looking forward to a more complete break with the past. Think of the range of sounds made by the Japanese, the Gipsy, the Chinese, the Spanish folk-singers. The composer of the future may ask for shrieks, groans, squeaks, screams, a thousand delicate shades of guttural and falsetto vocal tones, from his interpreters. Why should the gamut of expression on our opera stage be so much more limited than it is in our music halls? Why should the Hottentôts be able to make so many delightful noises that we are incapable of producing? Composers, up to date, have taken into account a singer's apparent inability to bridge difficult intervals. Why? It is only by ignoring all such artificial limitations that the new music

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will definitely emerge and the new art of the singer be born. What marvellous effects might be achieved by skipping from octave to octave in the human voice! When will the obfusc pundits stop shouting for what Avery Hopwood calls "ascending and descending tetrarchs?"

But, some one will argue, with the passing of *bel canto* what will become of the operas of Mozart, Bellini, Rossini, and Donizetti? Who will sing them? Fear not, lover of the golden age of song, *bel canto* is not passing as swiftly as that. Singers will continue to be born into this world who are able to cope with the floridity of this music, for they are born, not made. Amelita Galli-Curci will have her successors, just as Adelina Patti had hers. Singers of this variety begin to sing naturally in their infancy, and they continue to sing, just sing. One touch of drama or emotion and their voices crack. Remember Nellie Melba's sad experience with Siegfried. The great Mario had scarcely studied singing (one authority says that he had taken a few lessons of Meyerbeer)<sup>1</sup> when he made his *début* in *Robert, le Diable*, and there is no evidence that he studied very much afterwards. Melba, herself,

<sup>1</sup> Mario, as a matter of fact, also studied with Bordogni of the Conservatoire for voice production, with Michelet of the Comédie Française for declamation, and with Ponchard of the Opéra-Comique, but for no extended period.

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spent less than a year with Mme. Marchesi in preparation for her opera career. Mme. Galli-Curci asserts that she has had very little to do with professors, and I do not think that Mme. Tetrazzini spent her youth in mastering vocalizzi. As a matter of fact, she studied singing only six months. Adelina Patti told Dr. Hanslick that at the age of seven she had sung *Una voce poco fà* with the same embellishments which she employed later when she appeared in the opera in which the air occurs. No, these singers are as much freaks of nature as tortoise-shell cats and, like those rare felines, they are usually females of late, although such singers as Battistini and Bonci remind us that men once sang with as much agility as women. But naturally, when this type of singer finally becomes extinct, the operas which depend upon it will disappear likewise; for a cognate reason the works of Monteverde and Handel have dropped out of the repertory and the Greek tragedies and the Elizabethan interludes are no longer current on our stage. None of our actors understands the style of Chinese acting; consequently, it would be impossible to present a Chinese drama in our theatre. As Deirdre wails in Synge's great play: "It's a heartbreak to the wise that it's for a short space we have the same things only." We cannot, indeed, have everything. No one doubts that the



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plays of Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles are great dramas, but to become personally cognizant of that fact today one is obliged to read them; the composers to whom I have just referred can also be admired in the closet. Even now, no more than two works of Rossini, the most popular composer of the early nineteenth century, are to be heard.<sup>1</sup> What has become of *Semiramide*, *La Cenerentola*, and the others? There are no singers to sing them and so they have been dropped from the repertory without being missed. Can any of our young misses hum *Di tanti palpiti*? You know they cannot. I doubt if I could find two girls in New York, and I mean girls with a musical education, who could tell me in what opera the air belongs, and yet in the early nineteenth century this tune was as popular as *Un bel di* is today.

Coloratura singing has been called heartless, not altogether without reason. Nevertheless, at one time, its interpreters fired composers to their best efforts. That day has passed. That day passed seventy years ago. It may occur to you that something is wrong when singers of a certain type can only find the proper means to exploit their voices in works of the past, operas which are dead. It is to be noted that Nellie Melba and Amelita Galli-Curci are absolutely

<sup>1</sup> Seldom more than one.

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unfitted to sing in music dramas even so early as those of Richard Wagner; Dukas, Strauss, and Stravinsky are utterly beyond them. Even Adelina Patti<sup>1</sup> and Marcella Sembrich appeared in few, if any, new works of importance. They had no bearing on the march of musical history. Here, then, is an entirely paradoxical situation: a set of interpreters who apparently exist only for the purpose of delivering to us the art of the past. What would we think of a modern actor who could make no effect save in the tragedies of Corneille? Berlioz, one of the first to foresee the coming day, forewarned us in his *Mémoires*: "We shall always find a fair number of female singers, popular from their brilliant singing of brilliant trifles, and odious to the great masters because utterly incapable of properly interpreting them. They have voices, a certain knowledge of music, and flexible throats; they are lacking in soul, brain, and heart. Such women are regular monsters and all the more formidable to composers because they are often charming monsters. This explains the weakness of certain masters in writing falsely sentimental parts, which attract the public by their brilliancy. It also explains the number of degenerate works, the gradual degradation of style, the destruction of all sense of expression, the neglect of dramatic

<sup>1</sup> She made an abysmal failure in *Cármén*.

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properties, the contempt for the true, the grand, and the beautiful, and the cynicism and decrepitude of art in certain countries.”<sup>1</sup>

So, even if, as the ponderous criticasters are continually pointing out, the age of *bel canto* is really passing, there is no actual occasion for grief. All fashions in art pass and what is known as *bel canto* is just as much a fashion as the bombastic style of acting that prevailed in Victor Hugo's time or the “realistic” style of acting we prefer today. All interpretative art is based primarily on the material with which it deals and on contemporary public taste. Florid singing is a direct derivative of a certain school of opera and, as that school of opera is fading, more expressive methods of singing are coming to the fore. The very first principal of *bel canto*, an equalized scale, is a false one. With an equalized scale a singer can produce a perfectly ordered series of notes, a charming string of matched tonal pearls, but nothing more. It is worthy of attention that it is impossible to sing

<sup>1</sup> “The influence exerted by the prima donna on the evolution of music has nearly always been reactionary. Even so great an opportunist as Handel was driven to threats of personal violence in order to secure her submission, and the greatest and most original composers have been precisely those who treated her with the least consideration.” C. L. Graves in *Post-Victorian Music*; page 283.

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Spanish or Negro folksongs with an equalized scale. Almost all folk-music, indeed, exacts a vocal method of its interpreter quite distinct from that demanded by the art-song.

We are aware at last that true beauty lies deeper than in the emission of perfect tones. Beauty lurks in truth and expressiveness. The new art of the singer should develop to the highest degree the significance of the text. Calvé once said that she did not become a real artist until she forgot that she had a beautiful voice and thought only of the proper expression the music demanded.

Of the old method of singing we may be sure of the persistence of only one quality in the late twentieth century, and that is style. The performance of any kind of music demands a knowledge of and a feeling for its style, but style is about the last thing that a singer ever studies. When, however, you find a singer who understands style, there you have an artist.

Style is the quality which endures long after the singer has lost the power to produce a pure tone or to contrive accurate phrasing, the quality that makes it possible for an artist to hold his place on the stage long after his voice has become partially defective or, indeed, has actually departed. It is a knowledge of style that ac-

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counts for the long careers of Marcella Sembrich and Lilli Lehmann,<sup>1</sup> or of Yvette Guilbert and Maggie Cline, for that matter. It is a knowledge of style that makes De Wolf Hopper a fine artist in his interpretation of the music of Sullivan and the words of Gilbert. Some artists, indeed, with barely a shred of voice, have managed to maintain their eminent positions on the stage for many years through a knowledge of style. I might mention in this connection Victor Maurel,<sup>2</sup> Max Heinrich,<sup>3</sup> Antonio Scotti,<sup>4</sup> and Maurice Renaud.

A singer may be born with the ability to produce pure tone (I doubt if Mme. Melba learned much about tone production from her teachers), she may even phrase naturally, although this is more doubtful, but the acquirement of style is an arduous and tedious process and one which generally requires specialization. Style is elusive. A sensitive auditor, a good critic, will recognize it at once, but very few can define it with any exactitude. Nevertheless, it must be fairly obvious to the careful listener that Olive Frem-

<sup>1</sup> Born November 24, 1848, this remarkable woman is still singing at the age of seventy-six.

<sup>2</sup> Died, 1923.

<sup>3</sup> Died 1916.

<sup>4</sup> On January 2, 1924, Scotti appeared as Scarpia in a gala performance of Tosca to celebrate his twenty-fifth consecutive season at the Metropolitan Opera House.



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stad is more at home in the music dramas of Gluck and Wagner than she is in *Carmen* and *Tosca*, and that Marcella Sembrich is happier when she is singing *Zerlina* (as a Mozart interpreter she has had no peer in the past three decades) than when she is singing *Lakmé*. Mme. Melba sings *Lucia* in excellent style, but she probably could not convince us that she knows how to sing a Brahms song. So far as I know she has never tried to do so. A recent example comes to mind in Maria Marco, the prima donna of The Land of Joy company, who sings Spanish music with irresistible effect, but on one occasion when she attempted *Vissi d'arte* she was transformed immediately into a second-rate Italian singer. Even her gestures, ordinarily full of grace and meaning, had become conventionalized.

If this quality of style which, after all, only means an understanding of both the surface manner and underlying purpose of a composition and an ability to transmit this understanding across the footlights, is of such manifest importance in the field of art-music, it is doubly so in the field of popular music or the folksong.<sup>1</sup> A foreigner

<sup>1</sup> According to no less an authority than Cecil J. Sharp, the peasants themselves differentiate between the two, and devote to each a *special vocal method*. In *English Folksong*, he writes: "But, it must be remembered that the vocal method of the folksinger is inseparable from the folksong. It is a cult which

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had best think twice before attempting to deliver a Swedish song, a Hungarian song, or a Polish song of a popular or folk nature. Strangers, customarily, do not meddle in such matters, although we have before us at the present time the interesting case of Ratan Devi.<sup>1</sup> It is a question, however, whether Ratan Devi would be so much admired if her songs and their traditional manner of performance were more familiar to us.

On our music hall stage there are not more than ten singers who understand how to sing American popular songs, which, as I have said elsewhere, constitute America's best claim to a participation in the art of music. It is very difficult to sing these well. Tone and phrasing have nothing to do with the matter; it is all a question of style. Elsie Janis, a clever mimic, a delightful dancer, and possibly the most deservedly popular artist on our music hall stage, is not

has grown up side by side with the folksong, and is, no doubt, part and parcel of the same tradition. When, for instance, an old singing man sings a modern popular song, he will sing it in quite another way. The tone of his voice will change and he will slur his intervals, after the approved manner of the street-singer. Indeed, it is usually quite possible to detect a genuine folksong simply by paying attention to the way it is sung."

<sup>1</sup> An Englishwoman who gives concerts of Hindu songs, mostly, to be sure, art-songs, but so greatly do they differ from occidental songs that their manner of interpretation is a special study in itself.

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a good interpreter of popular songs. In this department she cannot be compared with Bert Williams, Blanche Ring, Stella Mayhew, Al Jolson, May Irwin, Ethel Levey, Nora Bayes, Cecil Cunningham, Fannie Brice, or Marie Cahill. I have named nearly all of the good ones.<sup>1</sup> The spirit, the conscious liberties taken with the scores, for the vaudeville singer must elaborate his own syncopations, as the singer of early opera embroidered on the score of the composer, are not accidents that just happen. To acquire them demands any amount of work and experience with audiences. None of the singers I have named is a novice. Nor will you find novices who are able to sing Schumann and Franz lieder, although they may be blessed with well-nigh perfect vocal organs.

Still the music critics, with a curious persistence, continue to adjudge a singer by the old formulæ and standards: Has she an equalized scale? Has she taste in ornament? Does she overdo the use of portamento, messa di voce, and such devices? How is her shake? Etc., Etc. But how false, how ridiculous, this is! Fancy the result if new writers and composers were criticized for failing to conform to the old

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1918. I have made no attempt to bring this list down to date, although, of course, other names might now be added.

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laws.<sup>1</sup> Creative artists always smash these ancient tablets and it does not seem to me that interpreters need be less progressive. Acting changes. Judged by the standards by which Edwin Booth was assessed, John Drew is no actor. But we have become aware at last that it is a different kind of acting. Acting has been flamboyant, extravagant, and intensely emotional, something quite different from real life. The present craze for counterfeiting the semblance of ordinary existence on the stage will also die out, for the theatre is not life and representing life on the boards, except in a conventionalized or decorative form, is not art. Our new actors, with our new playwrights, will develop a new and fantastic form of expression which will supersede the present fashion. Rubinstein certainly did not play the piano like Chopin. Presently, a virtuoso will appear who will refuse to play the piano at all and a new instrument will be invented without a tempered scale so that he may indulge in all the subtleties between half-tones which are denied to the pianist.

It is all very well to cry, Halt! and Who goes there? but you can't stop progress any more than you can stop the passing of time. The old technique of the singer breaks down before the new technique of the composer and the musician with

<sup>1</sup> So they are, my son, but not for long.

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daring will go still further if the singer will but have the courage to follow. Would that some singer would have the complete courage to lead! But do not misunderstand me. The road to Parnassus is no shorter because it has been newly paved. Indeed, I believe it to be longer. Caffarelli studied six years before he made his début as "the greatest singer in the world," but Mary Garden is still studying, although she has been before the public for eighteen years. The new music drama, combining, as it does, principles from all the arts, is all-demanding of its interpreters. The new singer must learn how to move gracefully and awkwardly (Thaïs and Santuzza), how to make both fantastic and realistic gestures (Snegourotchka and Louise), always unconventional gestures, because conventions stamp the imitator. She must peer into every period, glance at every nation. Every nerve centre must be prepared to express any adumbration of plasticity. Many of the new operas, *Carmen*, *La Dolores*, *Salome*, *Elektra*, to name a few, call for interpretative dancing of the first order. *Madama Butterfly* and *Lakmé* demand a knowledge of national characteristics. *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* exact absolutely distinct enunciation. *Monna Vanna* and *Tristan und Isolde* require acting of the highest poetic and imaginative range.



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It is a question whether certain singers of our day have not solved these problems with greater success than that with which they are credited. Yvette Guilbert has announced publicly that she never had a teacher, that she would not trust her voice to a teacher. The enchanting Yvette practises a sound by herself until she is able to produce it; she repeats a phrase until she can deliver it without an interrupting breath, and is there a singer on our stage more expressive than Yvette Guilbert? She sings a little tenor, a little baritone, and a little bass. She can succeed almost invariably in making the effect she sets out to make. She is, indeed, a living rebuttal to the statement often made that unorthodox methods of singing ruin the voice. Ruin it for performances of *Linda di Chamounix* and *La Sonnambula* very possibly, but if young singers sit about saving their voices for these operas they are more than likely to die unheard. It is a fact that good singing in the old-fashioned sense will help nobody out in *Elektra*, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, or *The Nightingale*. Cast Mme. Melba, Mme. Destinn, Mme. Sembrich, or Mme. Galli-Curci to sing in one of these lyric dramas and the result would be deplorable.

We have, I think, but a faint glimmering of what vocal expressiveness may become. Such torch-bearers as Mariette Mazarin and Feodor

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Chaliapin <sup>1</sup> have been procaciously excoriated by the critics. Until recently, Mary Garden, who of all artists on the lyric stage is the most nearly in touch with the singing of the future, has been regarded by those who sit in high places as a charlatan and a fraud. W. J. Henderson once called her the "Queen of Unsong." Well, perhaps she is, but she is certainly far better fitted to cope with the artistic problems of the modern music drama than such Queens of Song as Marcella Sembrich and Adelina Patti would be. It has occurred to me that Unsong may be the name of the new art.

*April 18, 1918.*

<sup>1</sup> When he visited this country in his prime in 1907-8. When he returned in 1921, he was unanimously saluted as the greatest living lyric artist.

*Variations on a Themē by Havelock Ellis*

I

The note-books of an artist always make interesting reading. These ideas, incidents, descriptions, these jottings down against the treachery of memory, which some day may fall into their proper places, often exhibit, when published naked, a more spontaneous grace than finished work. The later books of Arthur Symons are little more than note-books, fugitive impressions, shadows of ideas. Therein lies the secret of their charm. Samuel Butler's Note-Book, which has been published since his death, is a treasure house of thought and wisdom. One day it occurred to Havelock Ellis that he had collected more notes than he could ever conveniently find occasion to use, and he filled a book with them, *Impressions and Comments*, a delightfully stimulating volume, one of this author's best, brimming over with pictures and running commentary.<sup>1</sup> Herein one may find discussions of Sir

<sup>1</sup> In 1921, Mr. Ellis published a second series of *Impressions*

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Richard Burton, Romanesque architecture, vegetarianism and vivisection, the significance of the body, William Blake, Jacobean furniture, obscurity in style, Jules de Gaultier, crowd psychology, Bovarism, the symbolism of the apple, the Bayeux tapestry, flowers, the decline in the birth rate, and Granville Barker. Here is indeed a book which rewards any chance reader who flips open the pages. Picking it up for five minutes or an hour, I have never failed to discover enjoyment in it.

Recently, I came upon the following passage: "I have often noticed . . . that when an artist in design, whether line or colour or clay, takes up a pen and writes, he generally writes well, sometimes even superbly well. Again and again it has happened that a man who spent his life with a brush in his hand has beaten the best penmen at their own weapon. . . . It is hard indeed to think of any artist in design who has been a bad writer. The painter may never write, but when he writes, it would almost seem without an effort, he writes well. . . . And then, for contrast, think of that other art, which yet seems to be so much nearer to words; think of musicians!"

and Comments. Also, had not this paper been written before they were issued, there would have been reference here to George Saintsbury's *A Scrap Book* and *A Second Scrap Book*.

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### II

Why is it that musicians cannot write? I asked myself, for it needed only a half-moment's reflection to convince me that Mr. Ellis was right, although he does not attempt to explain the phenomenon. . . . Wagner is the first musician-writer to come to mind, for whether he could or not, Wagner certainly *did* write. He wrote not only the texts for his lyric dramas, but also countless papers, manifestoes, explanations, arguments, etc., most of which have been carefully collected and which Mr. William Ashton Ellis has rendered to us in eight volumes of faithful, if not very distinguished, English prose. Several collections of letters and the posthumous *Life* make a formidable total. Indubitably, priceless facts, brilliant ideas, withal somewhat incoherently and contradictorily expressed, lie buried in this mass of matter. Biographers have found this material useful; music critics occasionally turn to it for information; others generally leave it alone. Wagner, indeed, was always at a disadvantage when he wrote in words. Even the plays rise to no inspired heights without the music. Compare the direct and moving music of the love scene in the second act of *Tristan* with the metaphysical sentiments which flow from the lips of the guilty pair. Wagner's prose works, with their equivo-



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cations, their ponderous and opaque phraseology, their individual and very bad German, would seemingly resist translation, but Mr. Ellis wrestled with the task, accomplished it, and even emerged to praise Wagner's style, praise which has found no echo. The *Life*, of course, should have been a masterpiece; as a matter of fact, it is far from being a failure. Autobiography, even at its worst, is possibly the most enthralling form of literature. But compare the sparkling chapters of Benvenuto Cellini with the halting, obscure, and deliberately untruthful pages in Richard Wagner's account of his life and you will feel, somehow, that you have been cheated. And yet Wagner probably had more to tell than Cellini. The frank account of the Wesendonck affair, the full details of his ménage with the virgin king, a glowing narrative of his capture of Cosima von Bülow, in themselves would have supplied the material for a remarkable triptych in the manner of George Moore's *Hail and Farewell*, but Wagner could not put it down. He did not know how to write, and there was too much that he desired to conceal or gloss. James Huneker, Catulle Mendès, and a dozen others have done it better.

Gluck's preface to *Alceste* scarcely gives him claim to serious consideration as a writer. Mozart's letters, which are best perused in the vol-

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ume of excerpts compiled by Friedrich Kerst, contain many passages of interest to the music student, but they cannot be regarded as literature. Their style, the translator assures us, is "careless, contradictory, and sprawling." Beethoven certainly knew nothing of literary art. Schubert and Weber remained ignorant of it. Poor Chopin knew enough to stick to music. Paul de Musset replied to George Sand's *Elle et Lui* with another roman à clef defending his brother, but when Lucrezia Floriani appeared, Chopin contented himself by answering it on the piano. Mendelssohn's prose, exposed to us in his numerous published letters, is as sentimental as his music, and not nearly so pretty.

Jean-Philippe Rameau, composer and inventor of the system of the "fundamental bass," wrote several books: *Traité de l'harmonie réduite à ses principes naturels* (Paris, 1722), *Nouveau système de musique théorique* (Paris, 1726), *Génération harmonique* (Paris, 1737), and *Code de musique pratique* (Paris, 1760). I have not attempted to read these books, but J. E. Matthew<sup>1</sup> says of them: "It must be admitted that the style of Rameau is greatly wanting in clearness, so that some resolution is called for in reading his works." Grétry's *Mémoires*, published

<sup>1</sup> In *The Literature of Music*; Elliot Stock; London; 1896.

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in Paris in 1797, make more amusing reading, but scarcely rank as literature.

Offenbach's account of his trip to America is the work of a fifth-rate journalistic hack, certainly not worthy of a man whose music has been compared to champagne. Saint-Saëns is ponderous enough in prose; his books remind me of the bassoon figure in the middle of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Gounod is insufferably sentimental. Anton Rubinstein was a great pianist and an indifferent composer, but his autobiography is even worse than his music. Rimsky-Korsakoff, in his *Chronicle of My Musical Life*, exhibits himself as utterly unskilled in the practice of writing; his book owes its position to the fact that he had something to write about. We see very little of the artist who created *Carmen* in the letters of Bizet. Alfred Bruneau, a composer of the second class, is a music critic of the third. Vincent d'Indy's *César Franck* is a scholarly piece of work which serves its purpose, but it is in no respect a literary masterpiece. It could be read only by a musician. What an opportunity Massenet missed in his *Souvenirs*! What a career the man had! The book, however, is noteworthy neither for revelations of character nor for inclusion of pertinent incident. It is written in very mediocre French; even the spelling is

[III]

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bad. I recall Geraldine "Farar." Hugo Wolf, in 1884, and for the following three years, acted as music critic for the Vienna Salonblatt. Ernest Newman says, "He wrote singularly well," but the excerpts and summaries that he offers us in evidence of this prowess are not very convincing. If Wolf's skill as a song writer is not as great as Mr. Newman would have us believe (he places him above Schubert) it may be said without fear of contradiction that as a writer of prose he is little read even by musicians.

Cyril Scott is a facile composer of pretty music, the importance of which it would be a mistake to overestimate. Scott has also published five volumes of poetry and a volume of translations from Stefan George and Baudelaire. The titles of his books are: *The Shadows of Silence* and *the Songs of Yesterday*, *The Grave of Eros* and *the Book of Mournful Melodies with Dreams from the East*, *The Voice of the Ancient*, *The Vales of Unity*, and *The Celestial Aftermath*, *A Springtide of the Heart*, and *Far-Away Songs*. A. Eaglefield Hull, in his somewhat emotional book on Cyril Scott, devotes an entire chapter to this poetry, as he explains that Scott at times believes himself to be greater as poet than as composer. We learn via Mr. Hull that in *The Garden of Soul-Sympathy* the composer rhapsodizes "in soul-knit 'gladness,' and harmoni-

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ous visions of wondrous colour move majestically over the ear." Um, perhaps. Here is an example of Mr. Scott's "poetry":

"Sounds of colourless dreams, of strange vagueness  
telling:  
Immaculate music, heralding the life of sighs,  
Bells across the lone lassitude, rising, rolling, endlessly  
swelling  
Over the wasteland—solitude lost in the clear chaotic  
skies." <sup>1</sup>

It may be noted that Mr. Scott is troubled with a mania for alliteration. Such other instances as "mournful melodies," "shadows of silence," "a far-off flute has faded," "dreamful daffodil," "ambient arms," "future fiends," dribble through his work. It is perhaps a coincidence that Mr. Scott's alphabetical position on the poetry shelf lies half-way between that of Laurence Hope and that of Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

In prose Mr. Scott has written a book called *The Philosophy of Modernism*. For a chap-

<sup>1</sup> In a paper printed on page 16 of *A Musical Motley* (John Lane; London; 1919), Ernest Newman makes the interesting statement that "the defects of his poetry are unmistakably those of his later music . . . he commits just the same fallacy in verse that he sometimes commits in his music—he mistakenly imagines that a vision not clearly seen by him in the first place can be imposed upon the reader, in spite of its obscurity and its lack of outline, by means of resonant and parti-coloured diction."



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ter or two he presents some interesting ideas, though clothed in a style which in no sense could be described as literature. His essay on Percy Grainger is really significant. Then he maunders through an attack on the critics, which is neither clearly thought nor clearly expressed, containing such gems of opinion as this: "All the same, it is a noteworthy fact that the great spiritual geniuses and adepts of the world have never condemned and denounced their fellow-creatures or the works of their fellow-creatures: and to take one sublime instance—Jesus of Nazareth," etc., etc., etc. Cyril Scott is not one of the great composers and I would not have lingered so long over his case were it not for the fact that he offers one of the most typical examples of the musician as writer.

William Wallace, the composer of Villon and other tone-poems for orchestra, has written a book called *The Threshold of Music* which, I have been assured, is a good book, but, although it has been lying around my garret within easy reach for at least two years, I have never been able to read it.<sup>1</sup> Edward MacDowell's lectures, delivered at Columbia University, collected in a volume entitled *Critical and Historical Essays*, might best be described by the convenient epithet piffle, pedantic piffle at that. It is only fair to

<sup>1</sup> Nor have I yet (1924)!

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state that MacDowell himself was not responsible for their publication, and probably would have been violently opposed to it.<sup>1</sup>

There are, however, certain notable exceptions to my theorem. Berlioz was a good writer. He might have emerged a famous figure if he had simply given us his *Mémoires*, and his criticism is stylized and expert, sparkling with biting phrases and trenchant words. In *A Travers Chants*, *Les Grotesques de la Musique*, *Les Soirées de l'Orchestre*, his collected journalism in short, he wielded a delightfully nervous pen. His prose, indeed, is better on the whole than his music. Perhaps this is the explanation of his power in this direction. It is really a pity he turned to tone. Schumann, too, was far from being a bad writer, although he by no means stands in a class with Berlioz in this respect. Still his writing is simple and natural, radiating a certain happy enchantment. Occasionally, indeed, the man lights on a sublime phrase. Nevertheless, even his *Träumerei* is better than all

<sup>1</sup> Musicians, as a rule, are even satisfied to set bad librettos when they write operas because they have no true appreciation of good poetry or good drama. Most opera books rank very low under the head of literature and some of the greatest operas have been composed to the worst books. Weber, for instance, found inspiration in *Oberon*, and Mozart made masterpieces of *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*, while Verdi lavished some of his best music on the texts of *La Forza del Destino* and *Il Trovatore*.

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of the two volumes of his collected prose works. The indefatigable Liszt found time for many matters in his long life: love affairs, piano playing, composing, transcribing, pushing Wagner towards success, producing Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* at Weimar, and even for the writing of a number of books. None of these can be considered a literary masterpiece, but the *Life of Chopin*<sup>1</sup> contains passages of great charm. To James Huneker the most eloquent page describes "an evening in the *Chaussée d'Antin*, for it demonstrates the Hungarian's literary gifts and feeling for the right phrase. This description of Chopin's apartment 'invaded by surprise' has a hypnotizing effect on me. The very furnishings of the chamber seem vocal under Liszt's fanciful pen." Personally, I prefer the pages devoted to the polonaise. Liszt's book on the Gipsies, too, is engaging, although one is permitted to disagree with the facts.

And now we come down to a modern musician-writer, Claude-Achille Debussy. Curiously enough, this French composer was rather an adept with the pen. He had a penetrating sense of irony and he was not above epigram. In 1901 he became music critic for the *Revue*

<sup>1</sup> Liszt told Frederick Niecks that the enlarged edition of his *Chopin* was actually written by the Princess Wittgenstein. See *Programme Music*, page 315.

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Blanche. Two years later he held the same position on *Gil Blas*. In 1903 he went to London to write his impressions of Wagner's Tetralogy for this paper. Passages from his reviews have become bywords. Witness the following: "How insufferable these people in helmets and wild-beast skins become by the time the fourth evening comes round. Remember that at each and every appearance they are accompanied by their damned leit-motive. There are some who even sing it themselves. It is as if a harmless lunatic were to present you with his visiting card while he declaimed lyrically what was inscribed thereon." This was one of the earliest pricks in the weaknesses of the Wagner bubble. Here is more Debussy iconoclasm: he calls Gluck a "pedant," Bach "that worthy man," Beethoven "a deaf old man," Berlioz "a monster," César Franck "a Belgian," Massenet "our most notorious master." Of the songs of Schubert he says, "They are inoffensive; they have the odour of bureau drawers of provincial old maids, ends of faded ribbon, flowers for ever faded and dried, out of date photographs! Only they repeat the same effect for interminable stanzas and at the end of the third one wonders if one could not set to music our national Paul Delmet." "One stumbles on Mendelssohn" in Schumann's *Faust*; Grieg's music gives Debussy "the charming and

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bizarre sensation of eating a pink bonbon stuffed with snow;" Saint-Saëns's Henry VIII is "a grand historical opera." All this is witty and some of it is sound. However, according to J. G. Prod'homme, Debussy did not write everything he signed. This critic ascribes an article entitled *Enfin Seuls!* which appeared in 1915 in S.I.M. under Debussy's name, to a disciple, and he also informs us that the score for d'Annunzio's *Martyre de Saint Sébastien* was only finished on the day agreed upon by the collaboration of other disciples, very familiar with the Debussy manner.

On these four men <sup>1</sup> any case for musicians as writers of prose must be rested. Berlioz, it must be admitted, stands the test. Schumann and Liszt as authors would be completely forgotten (are, indeed, more or less forgotten) were it not for their music. Debussy's criticisms have not even been collected in book form, although doubtless they will be.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The appearance in 1919 of Ethel Smyth's *Impressions that Remained*, and a year or so later of her *Streaks of Life*, makes it almost imperative to put this Englishwoman at the head of the list of the musician-writers. I have never heard any of her music, but as a composer she is not generally awarded an important position.

<sup>2</sup> In 1921, after Debussy's death, under the title of *Monsieur Croche, Antidilettante*, certain of his papers, completely denuded of their malice, were collected and published by Dorbon-Ainé.



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III

And now let us pass on to the painters. Mr. Ellis himself reminds us that "Leonardo, who was indeed great in everything, is among the few great writers of Italian prose. Blake was first and above all an artist in design, but at the best he had so magnificent a mastery of words that beside it all but the rare best of his work in design looks thin and artificial. Rossetti was drawing and painting all his life, and yet, as has now become clear, it is only in language, verse and prose alike, that he is a supreme master. Fromentin was a painter for his contemporaries, yet his paintings are now quite uninteresting, while the few books he wrote belong to great literature, to linger over with perpetual delight. Poetry seemed to play but a small part in the life of Michelangelo, yet his sonnets stand today by the side of his drawings and marbles. Rodin has all his life been passionately immersed in plastic art; he has never written and seldom talks; yet whenever his more intimate disciples, a Judith Cladel or a Paul Gsell, have set down the things he utters, they are found to be among the most vital, fascinating, and profound sayings in the world.

The publisher avers that the composer saw the first proofs. In that case he must be held responsible for the denaturalization.

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"Even a bad artist with the brush may be on the road to become a good artist with the pen. Euripides was not only a soldier, he had tried to be a painter before he became a supreme tragic dramatist, and to come down to modern times, Hazlitt and Thackeray, both fine artists with the pen, had first been poor artists with the brush. . . . The list of good artists and bad artists who have been masters of words, from Vasari and earlier onward, is long. One sets down at random the names of Reynolds, Northcote, Delacroix, Woolner, Carrière, Leighton, Gauguin, Beardsley, Du Maurier, Besnard, to which doubtless it might be easy to add a host of others."

Quite easy; that of Whistler, for example, of whom Max Beerbohm writes in *Yet Again*: "He was a born writer. He wrote, in his way, perfectly; and his way was his own, and the secret of it died with him. . . . His style never falters. The silhouette of no sentence is ever blurred. Every sentence is ringing with a clear vocal cadence. . . . Read any page of *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* and you will hear a voice in it, and see a face in it, and see gestures in it. . . . There are in England, at this moment, a few people to whom prose appeals as an art; but none of them, I think, has yet done justice to Whistler's prose. None has taken it with

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the seriousness it deserves. I am not surprised. When a man can express himself through two media, people tend to take him lightly in his use of the medium to which he devotes the lesser time and energy, even though he use that medium not less admirably than the other, and even though they themselves care about it more than they care about the other. . . . Had Rossetti not been primarily a poet the expert in painting would have acquired long ago his present penetration into the peculiar value of Rossetti's painting."

There can be no personal plaint in this essay, although Max Beerbohm himself is "a man who can express himself through two media," for no one, I dare say, has attempted to imply dissatisfaction in this case with either form of expression. Max's delicate and fantastic sense of caricature plays as happily through *The Happy Hypocrite*, *A Christmas Garland*, and *Zuleika Dobson* as it does through his drawings of the *Rentrée* of Mr. George Moore into Chelsea, Mr. Thomas Hardy composing a lyric, and Mr. Joseph Pennell thinking of the old 'un. He turns from one art to the other with equal facility. Like Blake and Rossetti he has made his two careers run parallel. Du Maurier, also, was sib to these. To be sure, he began to write late in life and after he had produced *Peter Ibbetson*

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he devoted less attention to the social drawings on which he had founded so brilliant a career in *Punch*. Nevertheless, he illustrated his own novels, and who can think of Peter, of Trilby, of Svengali, without thinking of Du Maurier's drawings, so close was the intimacy between his two pens? Aubrey Beardsley, too, ran his twin talents side by side, although he gave himself more whole-heartedly to his drawing. Yet the fragment *Under the Hill* indicates a sure genius for a special kind of fantastic writing, as special in its way as his painting, and wholly analogous to it in spirit. Jacques Blanche since his youth has been both a prolific writer and a prolific painter. His fame as a painter has perhaps outdistanced his fame as a writer because of the celebrity of his models. He has painted very nearly every person of importance who has visited Paris during the past thirty years from George Moore to Nijinsky. Probably the best of his paintings are the self-portrait in the Uffizi at Florence and the picture of the artist Thaulow and his family which hangs in the Luxembourg Gallery at Paris. On the whole Blanche writes better than he draws; his essay on Degas is probably the best yet written. Wyndham Lewis, too, turns from canvas to copy-paper with infinite ease; so does Gordon Craig, while Santiago Rusi-

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nol, the Spaniard, divides his time between painting and writing plays.<sup>1</sup>

Often, however, as Mr. Ellis has suggested was the case with Thackeray and Hazlitt, the bad painter takes to writing. Thomas Hardy, for example, began his career as an architect, an allied art, and he has used his knowledge of the technique of this art very concretely in his books. This author even went so far as to illustrate his

<sup>1</sup> Many more names might be added to this list; that, for example, of William de Morgan, who turned late in life from the designing and manufacturing of pots and tiles to the writing of fiction. A writer in the London Times has said of him: "In 1922 De Morgan is known as a highly individual author who had been a potter. In 1952 he will be recognized as the greatest ceramic artist Europe has produced and whose books remain to picture the times and places he worked in." Vachel Lindsay illustrated his own book, *Going to the Sun*. When Mr. Lindsay left college he studied at the Art Institute in Chicago with William M. Chase, and, in New York, with Robert Henri. Robert Louis Stevenson made wood-engravings for an early book of his. Sherwood Anderson and William Vaughan Moody, on the other hand, seem to have taken up painting after they had become known as writers. This was also the case with A.E., who found he could express certain ideas in colour that could not be expressed in words (*Imaginations and Reveries*, page 60). Other names to be noted are those of Edward Lear, Jean de Bosschère, Arthur Davison Ficke, John Lafarge, Max Weber, Rockwell Kent, E. E. Cummings, Maurice Sterne, John Dos Passos, Oliver Herford, Laurence Housman, Howard Pyle, Philip Thicknesse, Ralph Barton, Kahlil Gibran, Mina Loy, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, and Lee Simonson.



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own Wessex Poems.<sup>1</sup> George Moore was a painter in his youth, and it was while he was studying art in Paris that he imbibed much of the atmosphere that is so essential a part of his books. To this phase of his life we owe such works as *The Confessions of a Young Man* and *Memoirs of My Dead Life*, but could such a passage as the description of the trees in *A Story-Teller's Holiday* have been written by any one but a painter? I hardly think so. Holbrook Jackson tells us that Bernard Shaw as a boy never wanted to write. He wished to draw, and Michelangelo was his boyish ideal. Gautier had the intention of becoming a painter when he

<sup>1</sup> Lucian was apprenticed to a sculptor. Ouida was a painter, withal a bad one. However, she once wrote to her friend, Mrs. Huntington, that she was a better painter than writer. William and Henry James studied painting with Lafarge. Arnold Bennett dabbled in art for five years in Paris. On inspecting his work, Pierre Laprade, the French water-colourist, remarked, "Monsieur, you have three times too much cleverness, and your work is utterly without interest." Nevertheless one of Bennett's paintings was used to illuminate the cover of one of his novels. Booth Tarkington said once to an interviewer, "First I intended to be an artist and not a writer," and O. Henry made a similar remark. Stacy Aumonier was once a painter. W. B. Yeats, originally intending to follow his father's example and become a painter, went to art school in Dublin. Rudyard Kipling illustrated his own *Just So Stories*. Robert W. Chambers and Roland Pertwee were once painters. Samuel Butler was not only a painter but a composer as well!

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first went to Paris. He entered the studio of Rioult for a period. "He had the painter's eye," writes Hunecker, "the quick retentive vision, the colour sense, above all the sense of composition." The creator of *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre* was certainly a painter, and when Fokine arranged this picture-poem as a Russian ballet he had but to follow the suggestion of the painter-poet. Huysmans was a descendant of a long line of Dutch painters, one of whom, Cornelius Huysmans of Mechlin, has a certain fame among the lesser landscape artists of the great period. Hunecker writes: "Joris-Karl Huysmans should have been a painter; his indubitable gift for form and colour were by some trick of circumstance transposed to literature." Remy de Gourmont called him an *eye*. His description of the carcass of a cow hanging outside a butcher shop is certainly the work of a painter: "As in a hot-house, a marvellous vegetation flourished in the carcass. Veins shot out on every side like the trails of bind-weed; dishevelled branch-work extended itself along the body, an efflorescence of entrails unfurled their violet-tinted corollas, and big clusters of fat stood out, a sharp white, against the red medley of quivering flesh." But it seems unnecessary to particularize: *A Rebours*, *La Cathédrale*, *Là-Bas*, all are painted

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from cover to cover. Octave Mirbeau painted in his moments of leisure, and so great an artist as Claude Monet looked upon his brush-work with favour. He owned a large collection of pictures by Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, Pissarro, Van Gogh, Rodin, and others, which have been sold since his death. Examine again the description of the garden in *Le Jardin des Supplices* and you will discover how he turned his other talent to account. With some writers, indeed, the analogy between writing and painting becomes perfectly clear. It is so with Gautier and Huysmans. Beerbohm says of Whistler, "Yes, that painting and that writing are marvellously akin; and such differences as you will see in them are superficial merely." It is obvious, too, that Joseph Hergesheimer approaches his task from the point of view of a painter. He selects and describes exactly as an artist in design might select and describe. He turns to his palette for a touch of cobalt blue or yellow ochre exactly as a painter might turn to his palette. This characteristic of Hergesheimer is so marked that several sagacious reviewers have noted that *Java Head* and *The Three Black Pennys* are to all intents and purposes *painted*. The facts in the case are that Hergesheimer began his career as a painter, painted, indeed, for several years before he began to write at all.

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IV

Inspiration, as it affects the artist, is a subject I do not approach without the proper amount of humility. Either it is something mystic, something entirely beyond human ken, something "ecstatic," as Arthur Machen would have it, or else it must be regarded as a ludicrously practical quality. In *The Cream of the Jest*, Mr. James Branch Cabell shows us with withering irony how a middle-aged, pudgy, greyish-haired, commonplace sort of man, whose conversation seemingly never rises above the most banal level, derives the inspiration for the most fantastic romance from his equally commonplace wife and the broken cover of a cold-cream jar. The mystery of the procedure is emphasized by the fact that *The Cream of the Jest* is sufficiently scandent, although in style, manner, and matter it is contradictory to a degree with which no satisfactory comparison comes readily to mind. Mr. Cabell, however, in his own way, possibly comes nearer to solving our present problem than any one else. For here, perhaps, we have our first glimmer of understanding. To put it simply, Mr. Cabell's Felix Kennaston depends on his wife, the cover of the cold-cream jar, and straggling, downright stupid conversation about the weather, for his inspiration. In Arthur Machen's *The Hill of*

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Dreams, the author-hero, Lucian Taylor, evolves a complete and mystic comprehension of all the manifestations of sex from the accidental embrace of a farm girl. The novelist, the painter, are thus reduced to models, however far-fetched and ridiculously inappropriate the models may appear to be in the light cast by the finished work. No doubt George Sand loved all her lovers, but somewhere in the back of her head lurked a realization that their ultimate purpose was to supply copy. Some one once asked Maurice Maeterlinck what had been his inspiration for the creation of *Pelléas et Mélisande* and his reply was, "I was writing a piece that suited my wife." Cecil Forsythe, in his book, *Nationalism in Music*, educes the interesting theory that a great sea-power never produces great musicians, but that authors and painters flourish under triumphant mercantile, social, and political régimes.

Painters and writers extract their material from the world. They must mingle with men, see and understand life, no matter how far removed from life their finished art may be. Art, it may be stated categorically, is certainly not a reproduction of nature, and yet without nature, or some human aspect of it, the painter and writer are helpless. Perhaps you have never seen a Monet hay-stack in a real field, but unless



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such an object as a hay-stack existed, unless the sun had lighted that hay-stack, Monet would have chosen another subject. It is not essential or important that Leonardo's Monna Lisa should exactly reproduce the effect of the model, but if no woman had ever breathed in this world the picture never could have been painted. Machen detects his ideal quality of ecstasy raised to the highest degree in Homer, Rabelais, and Cervantes, all men of action and wide experience. He points out, indeed, that one of the principal reasons *The Pickwick Papers* is not as great as the *Odyssey* is because Dickens was brought up in Camden Town. It was not carelessly then that Remy de Gourmont called Huysmans an eye, and his dictum that whatever is deeply thought is well written is certainly just. Havelock Ellis adds that whatever is *deeply observed* is well said. The artist in design, he continues to point out, is by the very nature of his work compelled to observe deeply, precisely, beautifully. He is never able to revolve in a vacuum, or flounder in a morass, or run after a mirage. So, when he takes up his pen, by training, by acquired instinct, he still follows with the new instrument, deeply, precisely, beautifully, the same mystery of nature.

The musician, whose art is the most mystic, the most profound, the most "ecstatic" of any, sim-

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ply because it deals with clang-tints and not with more definite symbols,<sup>1</sup> is not, as Cecil Forsythe has shown us, inspired by great deeds, by political confusion, by mercantile progress, by social intercourse. War never inspires great music, and England and America have produced less good music than Finland and Scandinavia, not to speak of Bohemia and Italy! The great Beethoven wandered alone, and he wrote some of his finest music after he became stone-deaf. The musical artist, indeed, shut up in a garret, may derive his masterpiece through an orphic process of introspection. There is no need for him even to read; an illiterate composer is a possible figure. "The song, the fugue, the sonata have absolutely no analogues in the world of Nature," writes W. H. Hadow. "Their basis is psychological, not physical, and in them the artist is in direct touch with his idea, and presents it to us, as it were, first hand. Given sound as the plastic medium, Music asks nothing more: it creates its subjects by the spontaneous activity of the mind." And W. F. Apthorp remarks: "The bonds which hold Painting, Sculpture, and Poetry fast to Nature are far tougher and of more inexorable grip than any connection discoverable between Nature and Music. . . . We may safely assert

<sup>1</sup> Every good musician, as a matter of fact, speaks a distinct language of his own.

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that, though a certain modicum of Realism, or Truth to Nature, is indispensable to the artistic status of Poetry, Painting, or Sculpture, Music can perfectly well do without it; also that such modicum of Realism—when present in Music—cannot be regarded as any true measure of her artistic status.”

It may be regarded as a significant fact that the four composers whom I previously selected as types of the fairly successful musician-writer all resorted to this “modicum of realism” in their music. Every one of them was what is known as a literary composer. Every one of them wrote program music. Every one of them leaned on nature, books, and painting for his inspiration. Not only was Schumann’s *Carnaval* and a great deal more of his piano music so inspired; at least two of his symphonies had a definite starting point somewhere outside music itself. Berlioz and Liszt<sup>1</sup> are notorious cases. It is only necessary to recall the titles of Berlioz’s symphonies, *Fantastique*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Harold in Italy*, or of Liszt’s tone-poems (a form which he invented), *Les Préludes*, *Tasso*, *Mazeppa*, etc., to realize that although music was the end to these men it was seldom the means. With Debussy

<sup>1</sup> Frederick Niecks writes of Liszt: “Except that it is more logical, his musical style is a pretty exact likeness of his literary style.”

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it was the same: l'Après-midi d'un faune had its foundation in Mallarmé; La Mer, Nocturnes, Ibéria, in nature herself. It may be generally observed, indeed, that musicians who use the pen to write prose or poetry, usually go outside music itself to search for the inspiration for their music. This is as true of Richard Wagner, Cyril Scott, and Edward MacDowell as it is of Liszt and Berlioz.

But what about rhythm? What about the so-called musical quality in good literature? In *The Critic as Artist*, Oscar Wilde says: "Since the introduction of printing and the fatal development of the habit of reading amongst the middle and lower classes there has been a tendency to appeal more and more to the eye and less and less to the ear, which is really the sense which, from the standpoint of pure art, it should seek to please, and by whose canons of pleasure it should abide always. Even the work of Mr. Pater . . . is often far more like a piece of mosaic than a passage in music. We, in fact, have made writing a definite mode of composition and have located it as a form of design. The Greeks, upon the other hand, regarded writing simply as a means of chronicling. Their test was always the spoken word in its musical and rhetorical relation. The voice was the medium and the ear the critic. . . . When Milton could

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no longer write he began to sing. Who could match the measures of Comus with the measures of Samson Agonistes or of Paradise Lost or Regained? When he became blind he composed as everybody should compose, with the voice purely. . . ."

This is all very well; perhaps the voice *was* once the medium of composition; perhaps the Greek musicians could compose in words as well as tone. We know very little about them. Nowadays, in Wilde's own phrase, "we have made writing a definite mode of composition and have located it as a form of design." There are certainly writers of today who make an especial effort to write prose which will read aloud well. I believe that Henry James dictated certain of his novels with this idea in mind. George Moore, too, has taken to dictating. But the rhythmical quality we note in writing is perhaps nearer to the rhythmical quality we note in painting than to that we note in music. Balance and a sense of proportion, light and shade, all these qualities are as instinctive to a writer as they are to a painter. He places a word, as the painter places an object or a point on his canvas, where it may catch the light and offer contrast to another word or phrase. Balance, light and shade, sense of proportion, are all part of the musician's jargon, too. Nevertheless, even if the rhythmical



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cal quality we note in music is identical with the rhythmical quality of prose or poetry, it must be remembered that the musician creates rhythm with pure tone, *sound*, whereas in any good prose or poetry sense and definite meaning must play their part. Most of us are unlike Mme. de Staël who delighted in the melody of verse, demanding nothing more. She would read a favourite specimen and declare, "That is what I call poetry! It is delicious, and so much the more so because it does not convey a single idea to me!"

Probably the best and truest reason, however, why musicians cannot juggle words is definitely a puritanic reason. Of all artists the musician is the only one who can express himself freely. In a casual paper, James Huneker once observed, "Because of its opportunities for the expansion of the soul music has ever attracted the strong free sons of earth. It is, par excellence, the art masculine. The profoundest truths, the most blasphemous ideas, may be incorporated within the walls of a symphony, and the police none the wiser." The painter even less than the writer can reproduce all that he really sees. Nor can the sculptor do more than the painter. These artists, then, find themselves free, unrestricted in the medium of words, *because hitherto they have observed and felt deeply so much more than they could express on canvas or in marble.* The mu-

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sician, on the other hand, feels bound and tied when he is forced to express himself in words. He cannot say as much (nor can he say it as vaguely) as he can in his own music. If a law be passed as a pendent to the now celebrated Eighteenth Amendment (and very probably it will be), making it a criminal offence to mention vodka or absinthe or even beer in a book, or to paint a picture in which people may be seen to be drinking, the musician may still compose bacchanals and brindisi; he may be as abandonedly Dionysiac, as intoxicated and as intoxicating as he desires. Nobody is going to prohibit performances of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Nobody will arrest Vincent d'Indy for disrobing a tune in Istar. The cream of the jest is that our national anthem, The Star Spangled Banner, was originally a drinking song!

*February 21, 1919.*

*On the Relative Difficulties of  
Depicting Heaven and Hell  
in Music*

Beginning with the eighteenth century and extending down through our own time, heaven and hell have exerted a powerful sway over the imagination of the musician. It would appear, at first glance, that the most abstract of the arts could express to us more satisfactorily than poetry, painting, or sculpture the symbolism inherent in the names of these post-death kingdoms. Heaven suggests goodness, nobility, sublimity, glory, simple faith, aspiration, charity, brotherly love, and, in the minds of composers, perhaps because of the mistranslation of the names of obscure Hebrew instruments of which we have no pictorial conception, these qualities are best expressed concretely by means of harps and trumpets. Hell, on the other hand, which suggests vice, ugliness, deceit, and defeat, is generally associated with snarling bassoons and rattling drums. Curiously enough, for there can be nothing inherently wicked about music, it is with hell rather than heaven that composers gen-

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erally have achieved better results; and the noblest music is not specifically concerned with paradise. The Symphony in C minor, of which it is unnecessary to name the composer, Schubert's Symphony in C major, which has only been associated with heaven through Schumann's adjectival comment, *Or sai chi l'onore*, and the final scene of *Die Walküre* were all no doubt inspired by God in the deepest religious sense, but the composers were making no attempt to picture to us the streets of pearl, the mighty chryselephantine throne, or the winged supernaturals who are said to play harps in the air. A real heaven in opera or tone-poem is quite likely to remind a musician of the key of C major, the tonic and the dominant, and the diatonic scale, whereas hell and the devil seem to insist on five or six sharps or flats, esoteric scales, and a daedal disregard for exoteric rhythms. The conclusion of the second act of *Hänsel und Gretel* furnishes an excellent typical example of what usually happens in music when the composer is concerned with heaven. Humperdinck here is satisfied, with the aid of transparencies, coloured lights, and state-lily tripping angels <sup>1</sup> bearing gilded palm leaves,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Pepys's experience with angel music in the theatre is unique and should be recorded: "Went to see the *Virgin and Martyr*, it is mighty pleasant; not that the play is worth much, but it is finely acted by Beck Marshall. But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world, was the wind

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to transfigure and glorify a tune which would form an appropriate part of the service at a Protestant Sunday School and which dramatically is probably quite in keeping with the Protestant Sunday School ideas of the two babes in the forest. It may be said, however, with its unimaginative succession of tonic and dominant chords and plentiful arpeggios, to represent one of the weakest moments in the score. Arpeggios, by the way, are seemingly an essential accompaniment to anything heavenly. It is not alone Little Eva who expires to them; even Richard Strauss invokes their aid for his balefully banal heaven music in his tone-poem, *Death and Transfiguration*, an episode which sends some of us away from the concert hall fully determined never to do any good in this world for fear we may be consigned to listen to such vapid music all our immortal lives. Heaven, indeed, must be a dull place to inspire such saccharine chords in the composer of the acescent and biting *Elektra*. Again, in *The Legend of Joseph*, an angel steps our way to a tune which suggests that Strauss is not at his best when thinking of heaven. Nor is Mascagni who, in *Iris*, introduces us to a Japanese paradise, via a lotus-flower route, much more

musique where the angel comes down; which is so sweet that it ravished me; and, indeed, in a word did wrap up my soul, so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife, that I could think of nothing else."



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successful. With the naïve simplicity of *The Creation*<sup>1</sup> and for the thundering, God-fearing music of *The Messiah* I have more sympathy, and of all heavenly music I do not believe better exists than the *Dance of the Angels* in Wolf-Ferrari's *Vita Nuova*. There is a test for great art, and you may apply it equally to Paul Verlaine or to Shakespeare, in that it treats of the sublime with simplicity and of the simple with sublimity. This minuet, scored for harps, piano, and kettle-drums, bringing to mind a divine fresco of pre-Raphaelite angels, of daisy-speckled green fields, of deep blue skies reflected in lakes of still deeper blue, circled by ilexes and cypresses, is indeed celestial in its simplicity, as poignant a simplicity as that of one of the poems of Sagesse. It suggests the simple faith of its composer and it begets faith in its listeners. There is gnosis in this music. Gluck, too, knew the secret; Gluck, above all others, knew the secret, but Gluck was inspired by the pagan heaven of the Greeks, a more æsthetic idealization than the heaven of the Christians. In all opera I cannot recall a more simple, a more touchingly serene page, than the music of the scene of the Elysian Fields in *Orfeo*. The first and unbelievably lovely dance

<sup>1</sup> Haydn told Griesinger, his biographer, that in one of the oldest of his symphonies the ruling idea was how God spoke with a hardened sinner, and begged him to mend his ways, but without making any impression!

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of the happy spirits in F major, "which," Vernon Lee assures us in one of the most mood-compelling of her essays,<sup>1</sup> "seems, in its even flow, to carry the soul, upon some reedy, willowy stream, into the heart of the land of the happy dead," is immediately pursued by an exquisite flute melody to which, if we are not disturbed by the action on the stage (and it is often well to cover one's eyes) we may fancy the filmiest of sylphs floating lazily through the ether. The song of the Happy Shade enhances this mood of enchantment and even the entrance of Orpheus does not break the spell, which continues to hold us in its power until the descending curtain shuts from our ears the divine chorus which closes the scene. The singing of Christian angels can never rival that of this marvellous pagan choir. The preceding scene of Furies exhibits Gluck's talent for demoniacism. How persistently they scamper and riot! How tremendous is their marmorean and terrible No! This naïve, but substantial, tonal tapestry suggests Orcagna's fresco, *The Triumph of Death*, in the Campo Santo at Pisa much more definitely than Liszt's *Todtentanz*, which is intended as a musical transmutation of the painting.

In the music of Gluck we are assuredly near the heart of true beauty which, after all, may be

<sup>1</sup> Orpheus in Rome, in *Althea*.

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the real God, the actual heavenly kingdom. Ideas differ, however. In 1665, Fr. Arnoulx, Canon of the Cathedral of Riez in Provence, published at Rouen a book, now very rare, entitled *Du paradis et de ses merveilles, où est amplement traicté de la félicité éternelle et de ses joyes*. After describing the sights of heaven, he turns to the pleasures of the ear: "If the glory of the picture is all that one can desire, also the ear is charmed by melodious music, pleasant harmony, gentle murmurings, soft and beautiful voices. There is a director; there are singers and musicians in abundance; there are thousands of millions of beautiful voices which sing in harmony, observing very perfectly all the rules of music. The director is Jesus Christ; the singers are the angels, the blessed, happy angels. Of these there are three bands, and each of these bands, in turn, is divided into three choirs: the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and the Thrones sing soprano; the Dominations and the Principalities sing alto; the Powers and the Virtues sing tenor; the archangels and the angels in the lowest choirs sing bass; even the saints come to sing with these. Jesus Christ gives the key to all, and intones the motet, which is new. With this celestial music and so many melodious voices of different kinds there is yet, for the entire perfection of the scale, the sound of the harp, of the flute, of viols, of

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the spinet, of the lute, and all other kinds of instruments which marvellously tickle the delicacy of our ears."

Music of hell is usually associated with his kaisership the devil. Once even, it is related, on the authority of a composer, the devil himself wrote a tune; this is Tartini's Devil's Trill Sonata which violinists often play to this day. M. Lalande, in his *Voyage d'un François en Italie*, tells the story, which he avers he had directly from Tartini, and Dr. Burney repeats it. Michael Kelly informs us, in an autobiography not entirely to be relied upon in other respects, that Nardini, a pupil of Tartini, assured him that the tale was correct in every detail. One night in the year 1713, it appears, Tartini dreamed that he had made a contract with the devil, who promised to be at his service on all occasions; indeed, in the dream, the musician's new servant anticipated all his wishes and fully satisfied his desires. Ultimately, the two became so familiar that Tartini presented the fiend with his violin in order to ascertain what kind of musician he was; when, to Tartini's astonishment, he heard the evil one play an air, so beautiful in itself and performed with such taste and skill that it surpassed all the music he had ever heard before in his life. Tartini awoke in a state of feverish excitement and delight, and seized his fiddle in the hope of

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reproducing the music he had just heard, but the arch fiend had departed and his music with him! Nevertheless, Tartini sought pen and music-paper and immediately composed the sonata which bears the devil's name. It is the best of Tartini's works, but so far inferior has its composer declared it to be to the music which he heard in his dream that he said he would have smashed his instrument and abandoned the art for the remainder of his life could he have subsisted by any other means.

It was thoughtful of the devil to improvise his sonata in the style of the eighteenth century. What if it had occurred to him to dash off Leo Ornstein's Opus 31? Could Tartini have remembered the notes and set them down? I doubt it. As it is, we have Tartini's word for the fact that the music as performed was infinitely more extraordinary than his transcription of it. Memory is treacherous at best, and to remember a whole sonata, taking in at the same time the virtuosity of the devil and the glamour of his presence, which must have shared interest with his playing, must be adjudged a remarkable feat. Broad, sweeping, sensuous melodies, and rapid, dashing cascades of notes, to be played with devilish abandon, alternate in this music. If Tolstoy had been more familiar with musical literature he might have found this composition more to



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his purpose than the harmless Kreutzer Sonata. In one section the leading notes are trilled and in the cadenza the violinist is offered an opportunity to trill to his heart's content: hence probably the title. The work is difficult and we are forced to the conclusion that the devil must have been an exceptionally fine fiddler.

Philip Hale assures us, as a matter of fact, that when the devil played the fiddle his bowing was so vigorous that the dancers kept on dancing until they died. Miss Jeannette d'Abadie saw Mrs. Martibalsarena dance with four frogs at the same time at a Sabbath personally conducted by Satan, who played in an amazingly wild fashion. His favourite instrument was the fiddle, but he occasionally performed on the bagpipe. The good monk Abraham à Sancta-Clara, according to Mr. Hale, once meditated on the devil's taste in musical instruments: "Does he prefer the harp? Surely not, for it was by the harp that he was driven from the body of Saul. A trumpet? No, for the brilliant tones of the trumpet have many times dispersed the enemies of the Lord. A tambourine? Ah, no, for Miriam, the sister of Aaron, after Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea, took a tambourine in her hand and with all the women about her praised and thanked God. A fiddle? No, indeed, for with a fiddle an angel rejoiced

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the heart of St. Francis. I do not wish to abuse the patience of the reader, and so I say that nothing is more agreeable to Satan for accompaniment to the dance than the ancient pagan lyre."

In 1858-59, Liszt composed two orchestral paraphrases of episodes from the *Faust* of Nicolaus Lenau, and in the second of these, *The Dance in the Village Tavern*, more commonly known as the *Mephisto Waltz*, the devil plays the violin, while Faust, in sensual excitement, prances away with a black-eyed peasant girl. John Sullivan Dwight, once a prominent Boston critic, held that this music was "positively devilish, simply diabolical . . . it shuts out every ray of light and heaven, from whence music sprang." Perhaps the spirit of ataraxy is in the air; at any rate, today we can listen to this piece without trembling.

Rubinstein's orchestral poem, *Faust*, seems to lack any reference to the devil, but in his opera, *The Demon*, which until recently, at least, has remained popular in Russia, he drew a full length portrait of the tempter.<sup>1</sup> There are minor

<sup>1</sup> Satan is also a character in Rubinstein's *Paradise Lost*, in which the fiend and a chorus of rebel angels are frequently heard to shriek and howl. The orchestral introduction to Part III paints the "temptation and the fall." In Sir Arthur Sullivan's *The Golden Legend*, Prince Henry of Hohenec, lying sick in body and mind in his castle of Vautsberg on the Rhine, has consulted the physicians of Salerno and learned

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glimpses of hell in *Der Freischütz* and *Robert, le Diable*; in *Grisélidis*, Massenet turned his attention to a bourgeois, boisterous, Gothic, gargoyle kind of devil, which he has limned with no little humour. The most important air of this amusing apparition is called *Loin de sa femme*! Another comedy devil is to be encountered in Tchaikovsky's charming opera, *Vakoola, The Smith*.<sup>1</sup> Charles Martin Loeffler, the Alsatian composer who resides in Boston or thereabouts, has written *The Devil's Villanelle*, a tone-poem after Maurice Rollinat's *Villanelle du Diable*. The music follows the verse line by line, word by word, while the two refrains, *Hell's a burning*,

that he can only be cured by the blood of a maiden who shall, of her own free will, consent to die for his sake. Regarding the remedy as impossible, the Prince prepares to die when he is visited by Lucifer disguised as a physician. The demon tempts the Prince with alcohol, to which he yields in such measure that ultimately he is deprived of place and power and driven forth as an outcast. Then, of course, a maiden offers herself to save him, and he is cured. This happy ending is foreshadowed in the prologue, in which Lucifer makes an unsuccessful attempt to demolish the Cathedral of Strassbourg. The second act of C. Villiers Stanford's dramatic oratorio, *Eden*, is laid in hell, and Satan naturally plays a prominent rôle in the ensuing scene which is devoted to the fall of man. In 1921, Ludomir Rozycki's ballet, *Pan Twardowski*, was performed at Warsaw. In this pantomime, based on an old Polish legend, the devil is the principal mime.

<sup>1</sup> Various known as *Oxana's Caprice* and *Cherevichki*. This opera is based on Gogol's *Christmas Eve Revels*. Later, Rimsky-Korsakoff composed an opera on the same subject.

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burning, burning, and The Devil, prowling, runs about, both have their themes. The word crapule suggests Aristide Bruant's celebrated ditty *A la Villette* (often sung inimitably by Yvette Guilbert) to Mr. Loeffler, and he quotes from it. To decorate the word magister he involves the *Ça Ira* and *La Carmagnole* in a contrapuntal fracas. Death plays the fiddle in Saint-Saëns's tone-poem, *La Danse Macabre*, while skeletons click bones and bound about. There is surely some devilry in this business. At least one American composer, Henry Hadley, has done his bit for the devil. His work is a tone-poem, *Lucifer*, after Vondel's five-act tragedy. The music purports to describe the war between darkness and the powers of light, until the defeated Lucifer is cast down into chaos. The Lucifer theme has been described as "sinister, foreboding." The work has been performed in New York and Boston, but I have not heard it.

It is the Faust legend, however, which has principally encouraged composers for considerably over a century to go to hell. Many of these operas, symphonies, and overtures have disappeared and only musical dictionaries and white-haired gatherers of statistics remind us that they once existed. Even much of the incidental music composed to be performed with Goethe's tragedy has fallen into oblivion. The very names of

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Radziwell, Lindpaintner, Béaucourt, de Peelaert, Porphire-Désiré Hennebert, F. de Roda, Rietz, Henry Rowley Bishop, Louise Angélique Bertin, Heinrich Zoellner, Lickl, Karl Eberwein, Louis Schloesser, Eduard Lassen, and L. Gordigiani have faded away. We do remember Schumann, but who knows his Faust music, maugre Mr. Newman's earnest praise? Spohr's Faust, too, is forgotten, Spohr of whom W. H. Hadow once wrote, "His whole conception of the art is soft and voluptuous, his Heaven is a Garden of Atlantis, and even his Judgment Day is iridescent." Weber might have composed a Faust. When he was engaged to write an opera for London he was offered a choice between this subject and Oberon. He chose the latter. Beethoven, too, once contemplated the possibilities of the theme.<sup>1</sup> Wagner's *Eine Faustouvertüre* is not performed as frequently as the prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, but there are probably few concert-goers who have not heard it. Felix Weingartner's incidental music for Goethe's play was performed at Weimar in 1908. More recently, a young Frenchwoman, Lili Boulanger, who died before she had achieved a style, set to music a scene from the second part of Goethe's Faust and called the result a cantata, but her devil is be-

<sup>1</sup> If Beethoven had written Faust, by Oscar Thompson; *The Musical Quarterly*; Vol. X, page 13.



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decked with Wagnerian melodies and harmonies. Liszt's Faust Symphony is certainly with us both in spirit and flesh. The third movement is devoted to Mephistopheles. Ernest Newman observes that this "section is particularly ingenious. It consists, for the most part, of a kind of burlesque upon the subjects of Faust, which are here passed, as it were, through a continuous fire of irony and ridicule. This is a far more effective way of depicting 'the spirit of denial' than making him mouth a farrago of pantomime bombast, in the manner of Boito. The being who exists, for the purposes of drama, only in antagonism to Faust, whose main activity consists only in endeavouring to frustrate every good impulse in Faust's soul, is really best dealt with, in music, not as a positive individuality, but as the embodiment of a negation—a malicious, saturnine parody of all the good that has gone to the making of Faust. The Mephistopheles is not only a piece of diabolically clever music, but the best picture we have of a character that in the hands of the average musician becomes either stupid, or vulgar, or both. As we listen to Liszt's music, we feel that we really have the Mephistopheles of Goethe's drama." Mr. Apthorp remarks, "One may suspect the composer of taking 'Ich bin der Geist der stehts verneint' for the motto of this movement," and James Huneker tells us

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that "in the Mephistopheles Liszt appears in his most characteristic pose—Abbé's robe tucked up, Pan's hoofs showing, and the air charged with cynical mockeries and travesties of sacred love and ideals (themes are topsy-turvied à la Berlioz)."

At the present day we often hear two Faust operas; occasionally, three. Boito, after his prologue in which Mefistofele challenges the heavenly hosts, ventures no nearer paradise than the classical Sabbath scene in which Faust meets Helena in a sort of Italianate duet. To me this is the unendurable episode of this lyric drama. The scene in which Mefistofele twirls the globe in his palm while his craven cohorts circle and chortle around him is extremely effective, but when Chaliapin appears as the spirit that denies it is a matter for doubt whether it is the Russian bass or Boito who makes the effect. Certainly. Marguerite's death in prison remains the best scene, musically speaking, in the drama. Berlioz, in his "dramatic legend," is nearest hell in the Song of the Flea, an excellent piece of sardonic ribaldry, although the ride, with its ghastly accentuated horse-hoofs beating up from the orchestra, is very wonderful. Ernest Newman thinks indeed, that Berlioz's devil is the only operatic Mephistopheles that carries conviction: "He never, even for a moment, suggests the in-

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anely grotesque figure of the pantomime. Of malicious, saturnine devilry there is plenty in him; no one, except Liszt, could compete with Berlioz on this ground. But there is much more than this in the character. In such scenes as that on the banks of the Elbe, where he lulls Faust to sleep, there is a real suggestion of power, of dominion over ordinary things, that takes Mephistopheles out of the category of the merely theatrical and puts him in that of the philosophical." Marguerite's glorification is a forgettable passage, just as Gounod's attempt at the translation of Marguerite is the weakest point in the score, but, as no one nowadays ever ventures to sit out an opera, it was perhaps clever of Gounod to place his heaven scene last so that only the ushers and stage-hands may hear it before they extinguish the lights in the theatre. Nevertheless, you will no doubt recall the episode, with its white-winged supernumeraries rising above the housetops to the accompaniment of arpeggios and a silly chant, not even the perfumed sanctity we have the right to demand of a modern French composer.

Faust, it seems to me, of all conceivable operatic subjects, cries out for collaborators. It is unfortunate that César Franck is dead because I think that the Belgian composer and Igor Stravinsky working together might have evolved

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something extraordinary. For César Franck came nearer to expressing aspiration and vague longing in his mystic music than any other composer. It is not alone the Rédemption and the Béatitudes that shine in blessed light. The D minor Symphony is to me one of the finest examples of simple sublimity to be found in all music. This haunting reticulation of tones aspires and even reaches beyond aspiration. The terrible first movement warns us of the Judgment Day and then in melting human tones forgives us our sins. The allegretto is like a graceful dance of angels, the angels of Benozzo Gozzoli, clad in robes of mulberry and lilac sewn with threads of gold and silver, their halos effulgent in a blue light, itself impregnated with golden dust, while the hautboys and harps ravish our ears and the soaring violins give ample promise of the glory of the heavenly choirs. Santa Teresa would have loved this music, music mystic and beneficent at the same time, not the mysticism tinged with chypre and verveine and essence of bergamot which makes Debussy's music a powerful stimulant to jaded nerves. César Franck could have realized the simple purity of Marguerite and he would have carried her triumphantly, gloriously, magnificently, through vague Gothic arches of tone which would have burst the bound-

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aries of any singing theatre and transported us to Amiens or Chartres.

But Papa Franck never could have managed the hell scenes of Faust.<sup>1</sup> He would have made of Abaddon a truly epicene kingdom, frequented by bardashes and catamites. No, for hell we should turn to Stravinsky, and what a dashing, erratic, spontaneous, discordant devil we might expect from him! A devil in quintuple and sextuple rhythms, a devil decked cap-à-pie with triplets in sixteenths, and figurations after the worst manner of sheol, a delightful, insinuating, firefly, marvellous fellow of a fiend, with piccolos, flutes, clarinets, hautboys, bassoons, French horns, and celestas at his beck and call, a Zamiel with nerve-racking glissandos on the violins and deep, passionate, long-bowed, mocking viola notes at his command, a Beelzebub with a shower of shuddering octaves and a flood of discordant tenths, an Apollyon who could sing bass and tenor and a little falsetto, in fact, a regular bing-bang-boom hell of a devil in the best Russian Ballet manner!

Now a Stravinsky devil played against a César Franck heaven would create a Faust warranted to keep the oldest subscriber to the Opera awake.

<sup>1</sup> When I wrote this I must have forgotten *Le Chasseur Maudit*.



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Even old Nietzsche, could he hear it, would be delighted with this nexus of mysticism and nervous energy, this combat of the life-force with the spirit of God!

*November 18, 1918.*

## *On the Rewriting of Masterpieces*

In a recent periodical George Moore,<sup>1</sup> indulging in an imaginary conversation with Edmund Gosse,<sup>2</sup> discussed the advisability of rewriting Robinson Crusoe: "The first part of the story could not be improved, but the end is a sad spectacle for us men of letters—the uninspired trying to continue the work of the inspired." And Mr. Moore makes a statement which is all too true, that few read on in the book after Crusoe leaves the island. So it is on the island that he would have him write his memoirs, dying before Friday, "and some admirable pages might be written on the grief of the man Friday, intermingled with fears lest his kindred should return and eat him—Friday, not Crusoe; and Friday true to his evangelization, would bury Crusoe

<sup>1</sup> George Moore has rewritten many of his own books. Henry James rewrote all of his novels and tales that he cared to preserve for the definitive edition. On the other hand, Ouida believed (and expressed this belief in a paper published in her *Critical Studies*) that once a book was given to the public, it became a part of life, a part of history, and that its author had no longer the right to tamper with it.

<sup>2</sup> This conversation is now included in the volume called *Avowals*.

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with all the prayers he could remember. . . . Crusoe must not meet with sudden death, rather an accident among the cliffs that would allow him to continue his memoirs from time to time. I would have the last page of the manuscript relate Crusoe's anxiety for Friday, who he foresees will die of grief, and Friday's last act, the placing the manuscript hard by the grave, which would be necessary for the completion of the story, for it is the manuscript that explains to the captain of the next ship that visits the island the presence of the skeleton by the grave. The captain's reading the manuscript would have given Defoe an opportunity to evoke a new soul, the captain's. How the poor savage must have grieved for his saviour and master! 'Like a dog,' he mutters as he turns the last page."

While reading these lines my mind reverted to a conversation I once held with the sage of Forty-second Street, Oscar Hammerstein, relative to his next production of opera. Oscar's idea was that when he again presented opera he should lay as violent hands as seemed expedient on the published texts of composers, transposing, rearranging, adding, subtracting, in order that the entertainment might be made more brisk, more appetizing to the customers. He spoke with particular emphasis concerning *Aida*, in which the principal tenor air occurs a few moments after

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the rise of the first curtain, an absurd situation for a tenor air in opera, as it is a convention for opera-goers not to put in an appearance until the second act is well begun. Celeste Aida, therefore, in Oscarian opera was to be sung some time during the second or third act. He also had under consideration a rearrangement of *La Forza del Destino*, which he acknowledged was full of pretty tunes but which was handicapped by a preposterous fable, and he reminded me that when he had produced *Les Huguenots* he had imported from his own Victoria Theatre of Varieties a wire walker who simply transported the public as he threaded his way back and forth on the taut steel during the scene laid in a meadow on the bank of the Seine, thereby diverting attention from the "dull music," how Mary Garden, inserted in the tenor rôle of *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, had made that opera a desirable form of entertainment, and again, how Odette Valery, plus live vipers and boa constrictors, had almost succeeded in making *Samson et Dalila* endurable.

The idea allured me, and seemed, at first thought, novel. As opera is seldom regarded seriously by musicians, there is no reason why it should be so solemnly conducted. There are times at the Metropolitan Opera House when one expects to hear the gong of high mass sound or Professor William Lyon Phelps begin to lec-

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ture on Browning. Reflecting in this manner, my enthusiasm mounted: surely no need to stop with *Aida* and *La Forza del Destino*.

The mere announcement, however, that operatic works of art were to be so tampered with would arouse the *New York Times* to such a condemnatory editorial that else only a threatened encroachment on Central Park could provoke, and yet, on second thought, I realized that this idea of Oscar Hammerstein's was not entirely new. He crystallized it into an advertisement slogan, gave it the power to create discussion, but he did not create it. Scarcely any work of art which requires interpretation, play, symphony, or violin concerto, is ever performed exactly as it was written, and I think it may be safely stated categorically that an opera never is.

Most conductors have found it expedient to modify orchestral masterpieces. I am inclined to believe that all of them have. Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven did not write for the modern orchestra, and when their music is performed under modern conditions doubtless some liberties should be taken with the text. As a matter of fact, it usually is. The weak orchestration of Chopin's piano concertos has been reinforced by many pens. If some one with courage does not inaugurate a similar mode of pro-



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cedure with the Schumann Symphonies<sup>1</sup> it may be predicted with certainty that they will drop out of the repertory. Schumann was an amateur at instrumentation; he heard these works on the piano. To those who rise in horror at this point to suggest that such meddling with the work of genius is sacrilegious I may be permitted to reply that any one who prefers to do so may always return to the original score. In case improvements are noted in the rearrangements probably fewer conductors will avail themselves of this privilege.

H. E. Krehbiel, an honest man with violent prejudices, wrote bitterly about one of the finest conductors we have had in New York for no other reason than that Mahler added a flute here or suppressed a kettledrum there. This one-sided battle, conducted with considerable din,

<sup>1</sup> In 1921, Frederick Stock, conductor of the Chicago Orchestra, actually undertook to revise the scoring of Schumann's Rhenish Symphony. Occasionally, to give greater clarity to the thought, he even added a measure. He replaced Schumann's coda by another in which, however, he utilized the composer's material. He also seized opportunities as they arose for contrapuntal embellishment in the various voices. The instruments he added were one additional flute (interchangeable with piccolo), oboe (interchangeable with English horn), clarinet, bassoon, two additional trumpets, and, outside Schumann's original list, a bass tuba, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, side drum, and tambourine.

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would have been ridiculous, even farcical, but for the sudden death of the besieged musician, which gave to the matter a tragic aspect, somewhat accentuated by an article which appeared in the New York Tribune on May 21, 1911. Reread in calmer days, this paper seems rather droll, but at the time of its appearance it almost broke up homes. Amusing, indeed, is Mr. Krehbiel's pompous description of the eupeptic auditors of the Philharmonic Society: "He (Mr. Mahler) never discovered that there were Philharmonic subscribers who had inherited not only their seats from their parents and grandparents, but also their appreciation of good music. He never knew, or if he knew he was never willing to acknowledge, that the Philharmonic audience would be as quick to resent an outrage on the musical classics as a corruption of the Bible or Shakespeare." This was an unfortunate comparison. Probably even Mr. Krehbiel himself has swallowed without loss of appetite Mr. Daly's corruptions (monstrous, they were, too),<sup>1</sup> Mr. Booth's corruptions, Mme. Modjeska's corruptions, and Sir Henry Irving's corruptions. I would be willing, indeed, to lay an even bet that

<sup>1</sup> The reader would do well at this point to open the first volume of Bernard Shaw's *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* (Brentano's; 1906) at page 160 and read the paper entitled *Poor Shakespeare!*

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no member of the Philharmonic Society has *ever* seen a Shakespeare play performed as written by Shakespeare. The dean gave Mr. Mahler credit for too little intelligence. The Bohemian Jew conductor probably was well aware of the fact that many of the grandparents of Philharmonic subscribers had assisted at the burning of witches and yet he would have been the last to advise the survival of this jolly custom. Striving to reawaken interest in music which had been heard so often, so badly performed, that it was received with apathy, he introduced careful alterations, perhaps not invariably well-advised, but never thoughtlessly, never for economic reasons, and never, I should be willing to swear, did he obscure a composer's intention. Rather he illuminated it. Permit me to continue to quote Mr. Krehbiel to show how far dull pedantry may exercise an ancillary function to blind obstinacy of opinion: "He did not know that he was doing it, or if he did he was willing wantonly to insult their intelligence and taste by such things as multiplying the voices in a Beethoven symphony (an additional kettledrum in the Pastoral, for instance), by cutting down the strings and doubling the flutes in Mozart's G minor, by fortifying the brass in Schubert's C major until the sweet Vienna singer of nearly a century ago seemed a modern Malay running amuck, and—

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most monstrous of all his doings—starting the most poetical and introspective of Schumann's overtures—that to Manfred—with a cymbal clash like that which sets Mazeppa's horse on his wild gallop in Liszt's symphonic poem. And who can ever forget the treatment of the kettle-drums which he demanded of his players?"

Mr. Krehbiel presents a highly flattering portrait of the lay members of the Philharmonic Society. I doubt if meddling with the classics, even when it is radical, causes these ladies and gentlemen as keen suffering as he imagines. At any rate, this procedure did not begin with Mahler, nor did it end with him, and I would like to wager that I could introduce salient modifications in such frequently performed and popular works as the overture to Oberon, Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, and Mozart's Jupiter without their being detected by more than seven or eight persons in an average Philharmonic audience (and this is putting the percentage considerably higher than seems justifiable), an audience which might include the lynx-eared dean himself who once, even with a program before him, levelled a half-column of abuse at a man named Prokofieff for having composed a piece which the aforesaid program plainly attributed to Vasilenko.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The curious reader may find a complete account of this contretemps in the *Musical Courier* for December 19, 1918.

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In one of the "golden periods" of opera no respect whatever was paid to the composer. When, for example, John Ebers was manager of the King's Theatre in London, the air, *Voi che sapete*, in *The Marriage of Figaro*, was sung variously, on different evenings, by the Countess, by Susanna, occasionally even by Cherubino, for whom it was written. It was the custom at this epoch for singers to do as they pleased by operas. When the great Mme. Pasta appeared in Coccia's *Maria Stuarda* "scarcely a single part in the piece escaped unchanged," writes Ebers, "so bent were the performers on introducing additions for the gratification of their amour propre." De Begnis chose *Il Turco in Italia* as the vehicle for his London début, but all the best parts of *La Cenerentola* were forced into it.

You may read, also, in historical tables and essays, which old gentlemen delight in preparing for us, of the character of the numerous operatic performances that took place in New York in the early nineteenth century, admittedly hodgepodes, airs from this and from that, with scenes transposed or omitted. We need only to recall Manuel Garcia's celebrated season at the Park Theatre in 1825, during which *Il Barbiere* was performed twenty-three times. Does any one imagine for a moment that Rossini's musical comedy was given as he wrote it? If any one



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does, let him examine the records, where he also may discover astonishing details concerning the presentation of the other operas offered during this season, which derives its magnificence from the presence of the elder Garcia and the young Malibran in the company. Thereafter, as before, on through the Mapleson seasons at the Academy of Music, operas were produced with due regard for the caprices of prime donne, and the pocket-books of impresarii. The ignorance of the public was taken for granted. Emma Abbott interpolated the Lullaby from *Erminie* in *The Mikado* and Adelina Patti interpolated *Home Sweet Home* in any opera she happened to be singing. To this day you may hear Frieda Hempel sing *Keep the home fires burning* somewhere in *The Daughter of the Regiment*.

This reference to Mme. Hempel has reminded me that I cannot recall a single opera in the repertory of the Metropolitan Opera House which has not undergone some change or other, many of them very considerable, and almost all of them advantageous. However, I prefer to hear and see the church scene in *Faust* given, as it appears in the score, after the death of Valentin, rather than before, as it is sung in our theatre and almost everywhere else. Valentin's air, *Dio posente*, was written for an Italian performance of the opera in London; it is never sung in Paris,

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but we hear it in New York, and, as the opera is performed here in French, Dio possente becomes *Avant de quitter ces lieux*. It was formerly the American custom, and a very good one too, to omit the ballet; that has been restored at our theatre, but one of Siebel's airs and Marguerite's spinning song are never heard. Gluck originally wrote *Orfeo* for a castrato and later arranged the part for a tenor.<sup>1</sup> In the newer version prepared for the Paris Académie Royale de Musique, the principal singer, with the consent of Gluck, interpolated an air at the close of the first act, an air which, until recently, has been attributed to a contemporary composer named Bertoni, and has been held in disfavour. It is certainly not in keeping with the rest of the music of this lyric drama, but Tiersot has established the fact that Gluck transplanted it from one of his own early operas. However that may be, it still remains in disfavour. When Marie Delna sang *Orfeo* at the Metropolitan she substituted an air from *Echo et Narcisse*; Mrs. Homer's custom is to sing the grand air from *Alceste*,<sup>2</sup> which has the disadvantage of releasing the trombones before their outburst in the furious scene of the second act. Fate played a considerable part in relation to modern perform-

<sup>1</sup> Now the rôle is sung by a contralto.

<sup>2</sup> *Divinités du Styx*.

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ances of *The Barber of Seville*. The manuscript parts of the overture and a trio were lost before the work was published; for the first, an earlier overture of the composer serves; for the second, sopranos substitute, during the lesson scene, whatever air or airs suit their voices and appeal to their tastes. Patti and Sembrich, indeed, often gave little concerts at this point in the opera, always singing three or four songs, frequently, seven or eight. Lucia was originally regarded as a tenor opera; now we only think of it as an excuse for a coloratura soprano to debate with a flute. As a result, the last act, which belongs to Edgardo, is omitted, and the work is terminated with the mad scene. As our opera-goers object to arriving at the theatre at six-thirty or seven, it has become necessary to cut huge chunks out of the Wagner dramas. Sometimes we are introduced to the Norns in *Götterdämmerung*, sometimes to Waltraute, but seldom to both together. Mr. Bodanzky, always original in such matters, dropped Alberich. I attended his next performance of *Parsifal*, hoping to find that the rôle of Gurnemanz had disappeared. No such luck. When Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House it was in a German version, prepared by Richard Strauss, who had even composed the trio with which the opera ended.

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But the most striking cases of rewriting at present on view at the Metropolitan Opera House are Boris Godunoff, Oberon, and Le Coq d'Or.<sup>1</sup>

Besides writing fifteen operas of his own, Rimsky-Korsakoff orchestrated *The Stone Guest*, left unfinished by the death of Dargomijski, and with the assistance of Glazunoff he completed *Prince Igor*. Another friend of Rimsky-

<sup>1</sup> Anything into which the human element enters is naturally uncertain. Conductors not only rewrite and cut operas before they perform them; they actually rewrite them *during* performance. For the past twenty-five years it has been the custom of Tom Bull at the Metropolitan Opera House to hold a stop-watch on every act. He has a complete and valuable record of the exact time it has taken each conductor to get through with an act on each separate occasion. Even the same conductor with the same opera with the same cuts varies somewhat on different evenings. The first night Mr. Polacco conducted Boris Godunoff he finished the first act three minutes later than Mr. Toscanini. There is also a record in Mr. Bull's book of a performance of *Samson et Dalila* in Philadelphia which was over *twenty-five minutes earlier* than those conducted in New York by Mr. Monteux. No extra cuts had been made; it was simply a matter of speedier conducting, and, of course, of shorter intermissions.

In this connection it is interesting to recall that George Henschel once wrote to ask Brahms if the metronome marks at the head of the several movements of the Requiem should be strictly adhered to. "Well—just as with all other music," answered Brahms. "I think here as well as with other music the metronome is of no value. As far at least as my experience goes, everybody has, sooner or later, withdrawn his metronome marks. Those which can be found in my works—

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Korsakoff, Musorgsky, left *La Khovantchina* incomplete at his death. Rimsky orchestrated this opera, composing the last pages himself. He made several excisions, which later were restored in a version prepared by Stravinsky and Ravel. In relation to this episode Mr. Calvocoressi writes, "We can see, thanks to the work of Ravel and Stravinsky, that the score (published by Rimsky-Korsakoff in 1883) was little better than a libel. Rimsky-Korsakoff

good friends have talked me into putting them there, for I myself have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together. The so-called 'elastic' tempo is moreover not a new invention. 'Con discrezione' should be added to that as to many things."

Singers, too, make many arbitrary changes in scores, sometimes because a tone is too high, sometimes because it is not high enough, sometimes for the same reason which led Rubinstein occasionally to startle academic hearers with cascades of false notes, because their memories fail them. Brahms may be quoted on this subject also. Because he had a severe cold and dreaded a certain high F, George Henschel wrote the composer asking if he would object if the singer substituted for that note another more convenient one. "Not in the least," replied Brahms. "As far as I am concerned, a thinking, sensible singer may, without hesitation, change a note which for some reason or other is for the time being out of his compass, into one which he can reach with comfort, provided always the declamation remains correct and the accentuation does not suffer." Certain changes of this nature have been made so frequently in opera airs that they have become traditional. It is no uncommon thing for an ignorant critic to severely condemn a singer for restoring the original, but infrequently heard, text.



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erred in all good faith. . . . Musorgsky believed anything resembling formalism to be fatal to art; he was as convinced that Rimsky-Korsakoff's idioms and methods were superfluously stiff and conventional as Rimsky-Korsakoff was convinced that Boris Godunoff and La Khovantchina were uncouth and crude."

Rimsky-Korsakoff called this doing his duty; his intentions were honourable. He also considered it his duty to rewrite Boris Godunoff, and since that work has been performed extensively in the singing theatres of Europe and America a constant hum of excited discussion regarding this version of the opera has simmered in the critical kettle. In a conversation with V. Yastrebtzieff, as reported in the Moscow weekly, *Musica*, June 22, 1903, Rimsky-Korsakoff said: "I originally intended writing a purely critical article on the merits and demerits of Boris Godunoff, but a new revised pianoforte score and a new orchestral score will be a more eloquent testimony to future generations of my views of this work, not only as a whole, but as regards the details of every bar; the more so, because in this transcription of the opera for orchestra, personality is not concerned, and I am only doing what Musorgsky himself ought to have done, but which he did not understand how to carry out, simply because of his lack of technique as a com-

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poser. I maintain that in my intention to reharmonize and reorchestrate this great opera of Musorgsky there is certainly nothing for which I can be blamed; in any case I impute no sins to myself. . . . Only when I have revised the whole of Musorgsky's works shall I begin to be at peace and feel that my conscience is clear; for then I shall have done all that can and ought to be done for his compositions and his memory."

Boris was apparently successfully produced at The Mariinski Theatre at St. Petersburg on January 24 (O. S.) 1874, but the opera did not retain its place in the repertory, although it was sporadically revived, and it was not produced outside of Russia. In 1896, Rimsky-Korsakoff's version was published, and has held the stage ever since.

Of this version, Montagu-Nathan admits that Rimsky seems to have "toned down a good many musical features which would have won acceptance today as having been extraordinarily prophetic." V. V. Stasoff, the Russian music critic, was opposed to the alterations. "While admitting Musorgsky's technical limitations," writes Rosa Newmarch, "and his tendency to be slovenly in workmanship, he (Stasoff) thought it might be better for the world to see this original and inspired composer with all his faults ruthlessly exposed to view than clothed in his right

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mind with the assistance of Rimsky-Korsakoff. . . . We who loved Musorgsky's music in spite of its apparent dishevelment may not unnaturally resent Rimsky-Korsakoff's conscientious grooming of it. But when it actually came to the question of producing the operas, even Stasoff, I am sure, realized the need for practical revisions, without which Musorgsky's original scores, with all their potential greatness, ran considerable risk of becoming mere archæological curiosities." Arthur Pougin falls in with this theory, "In reality, the music of Musorgsky only became possible when a friendly, experienced hand had taken the trouble to look over and carefully correct it." James Hunecker writes: "Musorgsky would not study the elements of orchestration and one of the penalties he paid was that his friend, Rimsky-Korsakoff, 'edited' Boris Godunoff (in 1896 a new edition appeared with changes, purely practical, as Calvocoressi notes, but the orchestration, clumsy as it is, largely remains the work of the composer) and La Khovantchina was scored by Rimsky-Korsakoff, and no doubt 'edited,' that is revised, what picture experts call 'restored.'" Calvocoressi contents himself with this laconic statement: "In 1896 a new edition of Boris Godunoff appeared, revised by M. Rimsky-Korsakoff. Certain of the changes that one remarks in this have a purely

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practical end, which is to facilitate the execution; others are only motivated by the desire to take away from the isolated aspect of the work, to render it less disconcerting to the public." Jean Marnold,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, screams with rage: "He (Rimsky-Korsakoff) changes the order of the last two tableaux, thus denaturing at its conclusion the expressly popular essence and the psychology of the drama. The scene of Boris with his children is especially mutilated. Rimsky-Korsakoff cuts, at his happiness, one, two, or three measures, as serenely as he cuts fifteen or twenty. At will he transposes a tone, a half-tone, makes sharps or flats natural, alters modulations. He even corrects the harmony. During the tableau in the cell of Pimen the liturgical Dorian mode is adulterated by a banal D minor. The interval of the augmented fifth (a favourite device of Musorgsky) is frequently the object of this equilateral ostracism. He has no more respect for traditional harmony. Nearly every instant Rimsky-Korsakoff changes something for the unique reason that it is his pleasure to do so. From one end of the work to the other he planes, files, polishes, pulls together, retouches, embellishes, makes insipid, or corrupts. In comparing the two scores one can hardly believe one's eyes. In the two hundred and fifty-eight pages of that

<sup>1</sup> In *Musique d'autrefois et d'aujourd'hui*.

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of Rimsky-Korsakoff there are perhaps not twenty which conform to the original text."

Whether or no Rimsky-Korsakoff spoiled his friend's opera I have no personal means of determining. Original scores of Boris do not, so far as I am aware, exist in New York. Apparently, they do not abound anywhere.<sup>1</sup> It may, however, be offered in extenuation of Rimsky-Korsakoff's act that his version has consistently held the stage and has made a tremendous effect wherever it has been presented. The original work may or may not have surpassed its successor, but, at any rate, Boris, as it now stands, is one of the most solid, one of the most striking, one of the most beautiful works in the current repertory.

The case of Oberon is another matter altogether. Regarding with greedy eyes the success of *Der Freischütz* in London, the Director of Covent Garden Theatre sought a new work from

<sup>1</sup> After the first edition of Rimsky-Korsakoff's *My Musical Life* (Knopf; 1923) was on the market, I received a letter from Mr. O. G. Sonneck informing me that the original vocal score of Boris had reposed in the Library of Congress at Washington "for years and years." No American critic, so far as I know, had hitherto been informed of that fact. Certainly, in all the protracted discussion that has raged in the press over this question, the phrase "the original score is not available for examination" has constantly bobbed up. I have no present intention of examining this score myself, but any one who suffers from curiosity, is apparently at liberty to do so.



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Weber. The composer, near death and anxious to provide for the future of his family, consented to set an English book to music. Two subjects were offered him, Faust and Oberon. He chose the latter and J. R. Planché prepared the book, from time to time sending scenes on to Weber, who went to the trouble of learning English so that he might the better understand what he was writing music for. It was felt that too great a strain must not be put upon the appreciatory powers of a Covent Garden audience. Difficulties, too, presented themselves. The singers in this theatre could not act, the actors could not sing. As a result of this situation Planché prepared a strange opera book with plenty of opportunity for a spectacular scene painter (there were something like twenty-one scenes in the original version), in which there was a great deal of spoken dialogue, much of it allotted to characters who never sang a note. With true fatidical spirit Weber wrote to Planché, "The intermixing of so many principal actors who do not sing, the omission of the music in the most important moments—all deprive our Oberon of the title of an opera, and will make him unfit for all other theatres in Europe." Nevertheless, deeply inspired by the subject, Weber completed the work, intending to rewrite it later for performance in other theatres, but he died in London in June

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1826, two months after *Oberon* was produced, before he had time to carry out his intention.

There the matter stood. Weber had composed what I, at any rate, consider his finest opera in a form which made it simply unpresentable under any but the original conditions. It is therefore no subject for wonder that since that day it has seldom, if ever, been performed as written. Huon's first air proving unsuitable to the voice of Braham, the tenor who created the rôle, Weber wrote a new air. In the early German performances the original song was restored, and it was not long before music was provided for the dialogue. Berlioz heard Schroeder-Devrient sing *Rezia* in Paris four years after the London production. The *Théâtre-Lyrique*, under the direction of Carvalho, mounted the work in 1857. In 1860, Sir Julius Benedict arranged an Italian version of *Oberon* for London, adding certain numbers from *Euryanthe* and providing music for the spoken dialogue. Wüllner, Josef Schlaar, and Gustav Mahler are others who have made new versions of the work for practical operatic production. Mahler's arrangement was heard at Cologne and when he was in New York he vainly urged Heinrich Conried to produce it at the Metropolitan. Up to the year 1918, however, no version had been regarded as definitive, unless it might have been that of Sir Julius Bene-

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dict, which has many disadvantages. Nevertheless, Oberon was a favourite opera in England and America during the Victorian era. Tietjens sang Rezia and Alboni sang Fatima; later, Pappenheim and Parepa-Rosa sang Rezia (often spelled Reiza) and Trebelli sang Fatima. The work, however, had never been performed at the Metropolitan Opera House until Arthur Bodanzky prepared his version. Aside from the lack of a definitive version, if any such lack were felt, there were probably many excellent reasons for this delay. The opera demands a great number of elaborate decorations, including the representation of a storm on a rocky coast, fairy festivals, and caliph's banquets. Obviously, expense is involved. Then the music exacts, for its correct interpretation, not only voices of great range, but also consummate art. The part of Rezia is beyond the reach of many a dramatic soprano, and tenors might sing Edgardo, Radames, Canio, and Rodolfo all their lives without being able to get through the first air of Huon.

Mr. Bodanzky telescoped the text into nine scenes, omitting several of the characters whose dialogue was spoken and providing music for the others. In every instance, this music is built up on themes found in the work itself. The final chorus, for example, is constructed on the num-

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ber, subsequently discarded, which Weber wrote for Braham. The result may be regarded as generally admirable, for Mr. Bodanzky's work has the desirable effect of knitting together the very lovely music of the piece. Oberon assuredly has the ardency of true beauty. The overture and Rezia's grand air are both familiar in the concert room, but both are heard to more advantage in the opera house. For Ocean, thou mighty monster, indeed, scenic embellishment is more essential than for the final scene of *Die Walküre*, and the overture, with its foreshadowing of the fairy music, Huon's chivalric air, and the quartet, *Over the dark blue waters*, comes back to memory with renewed force and meaning after the fall of the final curtain. For myself, I may say that I like Oberon almost as much as I like the operas of Gluck and Mozart, and a great deal more than I like the lyric dramas of Richard Wagner.

The third rewritten opera in the repertory of the Metropolitan Opera House is presented in its new form in direct opposition to the intentions of the composer and against the protests of the composer's widow. It is amusing to recall that the composer was Rimsky-Korsakoff who, after his death, has been served as he served others.<sup>1</sup> In this instance, however, music and book escape

<sup>1</sup>This is the second instance. *Scheherazade* was not writ-

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revision. The alterations concern solely the manner of interpretation.

Rimsky-Korsakoff completed *The Golden Cockerel* (given in New York in its French form as *Le Coq d'Or*) in 1907. The censor, justifiably regarding the book as a satire directed at royalty, at first refused to sanction its Russian production, and it did not reach the stage before the composer's death in 1908. Later, however, it was performed with success in Russia. Some time before the summer of 1914, Serge de Diaghileff, the director of the Russian Ballet, searching for novelties suitable for production by that organization in London and Paris, hit upon this quaintest and most beautiful of Rimsky-Korsakoff's many operas and, with the assistance of Fokine, invented a novel presentation of it. This was a performance involving two casts, one to sing and the other to act.<sup>1</sup> The singing cast,

ten as a ballet and the composer's program for this symphony differs in every respect from that of Fokine.

<sup>1</sup> If this idea had occurred to Planché all the original difficulties in regard to *Oberon* might have been brushed aside. It was not a new idea even in Planché's day. In Lumley's *Reminiscences of the Opera*, I find the following: "On the English stage, where the double qualities of acting and singing were in those days not to be found combined in one person, a tenor-lover was introduced *to sing* the music of Gustavus (in Auber's *Gustave III*), whilst the part itself was *acted* by Mr. Warde, a tragedian of considerable merit. A similar arrangement of an operatic work had long before distinguished



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together with the chorus, was arranged in uniforms on two tiers of benches placed on either side of the stage, leaving the centre of the stage free for the ballet to enact the play. Consequently, after a first gasp of amazement, the spectators soon accepted the singers as part of the decoration and followed with glee the history of the silly King Dodon and the amazingly naughty and mysterious Queen of Shemakahn. The fantastries of the book lend themselves well to this manner of treatment and the result was a success which surpassed all expectations, a success which was repeated later in New York.

These three operas, indeed, Boris Godunoff, Oberon, and The Golden Cockerel, are assuredly the most delightful works in the current (1918-19) repertory of the Metropolitan Opera House. I should be the last to point the moral herein indicated. There may, indeed, be some operas which do not need rewriting. The fact remains that the creative power and a sense of the theatre do not always go together. As Sir

the English version of *The Barber of Seville*, in which the part of Almaviva was enacted by a light comedian, whilst an additional character, one Fiorello, sang Rossini's music of the part." One might go still further back: in Orazio Vecchi's *Amfiparnasso*, an attempt to convert the *Commedia dell'Arte* into lyric drama, produced at Modena in 1594, the music was sung by five singers *behind the scenes* while the action and speech of the actors on the stage was synchronized with the music.

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Charles Villiers Stanford so justly remarks, it is a mistake to prolong the Elijah after the ascent of the fiery chariot. "When a piece is over it is over." This is a lesson Wagner never learned. His motto appears to have been, When a piece is over it is just beginning. Will some one, I wonder, have the courage to lop King Mark's speech off the end of the second act of Tristan?

But while we are rewriting masterpieces why not go into the matter with thoroughness? Why not engage J. M. Barrie to write a new book for *The Magic Flute*? Why not employ Mr. Belasco to cut and contrive and comb a single opera out of *Mefistofele* and *La Gioconda*? The idea fascinates me. I should delight in doing a little snipping and rearranging myself. I have a fancy, for instance, for playing *Il Trovatore* backwards, something like this:

The opera opens with the scene in the prison where the Gipsy, Azucena, has been thrown at the instigation of the wicked Count. She and Manrico sing the duet, *Si la stanchezza*, after which Manrico obliges with *Di quella pira*. Leonora enters and vainly pleads with the Count to spare Manrico, but that one, being a baritone and jealous of the tenor's high C, orders him to be put to death at once. The audience, if we may take into account the way *Di quella pira* is usually rendered, will be properly grateful, but

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the horrified Azucena informs the Count that he has murdered his own brother. Here the scene changes to the tower where Leonora, assisted by the spirit of Manrico, looking down from heaven, warbles the *Miserere*.

The second act opens in the camp. Azucena, dragged in, moans her plaintive lament for Manrico, while Leonora, stricken with grief, immures herself in a convent, from which she is abducted by the Count, who learns that Azucena has lied about the burned Manrico, her own son and not his brother. The act is brought to a spirited conclusion by a performance of the anvil chorus in which all the principals ecstatically join.

In the third act, Leonora, hearing a voice in the garden of the Count's palace and in her madness fancying it to be the voice of her dear, dead Manrico, ventures out into the moonlight. The voice, however, proves to be that of the Count di Luna, but Leonora has reached such a state of indifference that she falls into his arms in a magnificent state of bravura, while the Count delightedly comes to her aid with a performance of Manrico's music transposed into as comfortable a key as possible.

Other ideas present themselves. The example of *Le Coq d'Or* should make it possible to continue indefinitely the enormous vogue of Geraldine Farrar, who might act her rôles unre-

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strainedly while somebody else sings them, and if any more American operas are to be produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, might I suggest that Irving Berlin be called in to rewrite them?

*January 1, 1919.*

*On Hearing What You Want  
When You Want It*

Reflecting today in my garret, I find myself in a melancholy mood. I have searched the concert announcements in the advertising columns of my morning newspaper only to discover that I must hear—if I hear anything at all—either Beethoven's Seventh Symphony or Mozart's Symphony in G minor; either the Coriolan overture or the overture to Euryanthe; either Chabrier's Bourrée fantasque (which would be new to my ears) or Sibelius's Finlandia; and, at the Opera, I am offered Aida. Now this is a discouraging state of affairs for a man of temperament who would like to order his music as he orders his library or his dinner. One is never obliged to eat at some one else's behest, one reads according to one's fancy, but when one wants to listen to music one must perforce listen to what is being played or else not listen at all, unless—and here it is well to admit the futility of the qualification—one is Ludwig of Bavaria. This afternoon I have a whim to attend a concert, the program of which shall consist of César



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Franck's D minor Symphony, Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and Debussy's *La Mer*. Franck's symphony will, of course, be performed some time this winter, but the performance will fall on a day on which I have no ambition to hear it, and the other pieces will not, in all probability, be performed at all.

My temporary prejudices and tastes in music, indeed, seem ever at variance with my opportunities. For many years I longed to hear Vincent d'Indy's *Istar*. The idea of the music disrobing, as the goddess of the legend disrobed, awakened my curiosity, a curiosity whetted still sharper by the rhapsodies which Philip Hale and James Huneker have woven around this inverted set of variations. But even curiosity perishes with age and on the day when, finally, I saw the thing announced, I discovered, to my surprise, that all appetite had left me. Nevertheless, on this bright winter afternoon, when I should have preferred to walk in the park or even to attend a moving-picture theatre, I forced myself to enter the concert hall. The auditorium was overheated and stuffy; I was surrounded by a crowd of hysterical females who had come to see a Russian violinist, whose name, in translation, was Mike or Alec. I sat through a long program, for *Istar* was announced to close the concert, and when at last it was performed, I began idly

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to turn over the pages of my book of notes about the music, reading the advertisements with an interest which I found I could not devote to the composition itself. That, in fact, I scarcely listened to. This is not a unique experience; it is usual. The evenings on which I yearn to hear Boris Godunoff they sing *L'Amore dei Tre Re* at the Opera; the afternoons on which I have a deep longing to listen to Liszt's B minor Sonata, the Hofmanns and Bauers and Myra Hesses are all busy playing Chopin's.

This is both confusing and irritating, for taste in music changes, especially if you hear a good deal of it. I have worshipped at several altars. Some of them I return to when I can. The cool, sane, classic beauty of Gluck, the gay, sweet-sour, tragi-comedy of Mozart, the red blare and poster-like dash of American jazz, the pellucid harmonies of Debussy, so like the nocturnes of Whistler, the refreshing melodies of Arthur Sullivan, are seldom unwelcome, but the days in which I enjoy the empty orchestral orgies of Richard Strauss, the trumpet blasts of Richard Wagner, the fantastic but futile inventions of Hector Berlioz, and the thunderbolts of Beethoven come more rarely. Other intermittent humours find me hankering for the ironic acidity of the quaintly perverse *l'Heure Espagnole*, for the bombast of Handel, whom Samuel Butler

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very nearly succeeded in making famous again, for Chinese music, even for Grieg's piano concerto, but seldom do mood and music strike me simultaneously.

There are hours in which the charming melancholy and faded sentimentality of Werther and Eugen Oniegin, lyric dramas curiously similar in feeling, would come as a boon. There are nights when *Les Larmes*, and the Letter Song in Tchaikovsky's opera, would send me sobbing from the theatre, for these airs evoke a certain artificial Victorian atmosphere of grief more potently than any book or picture with which I am familiar. When Tatjana begins the Letter Song, if you are in the mood—and how seldom this is!—the key of the play is handed into your keeping, the soul of the composition communes with your own soul, and a vague sympathy with something perhaps alien to your own nature takes possession of you.

Sometimes I am seized with a desire for the dance, a craving for a conventional rhythmic expression, for, at least, even if one cannot dance, one sometimes itches to hear dance music, but these will not be the nights on which *The Beautiful Blue Danube*, *Coppélia*, or Beethoven's Seventh Symphony will be played. *Der Rosenkavalier* would fill the breach, but how often can one hear *Der Rosenkavalier*?

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I have never listened to *The Barber of Seville* without enjoying it, and there are times when I burn to carry Rossinian explorations farther, when I perhaps might take delight in *Tancredi*, with its still delicious, but now never sung, *Di tanti palpiti*, sacred to the memory of *Giuditta Pasta*, and *La Cenerentola*. Often, indeed, musing before the fire in my garret, I wistfully beg the gods to put it into somebody's head to play me the tunes I have read about so often, but which now I can hear only in my mind's ear through the formality of the printed scores: for example, *Félicien David's Le Désert*, that "odesymphonie" which *Hector Berlioz* hailed as a *chef-d'œuvre* and which seemingly remained a *chef-d'œuvre* until the calmly sardonic *Auber* one day remarked, "I will wait until *David* gets off his camel." Either the epigram or the subsequent dismounting killed the piece, for now it is never played. But I should like to hear it: what could be quainter than *Second Empire* orientalism? Would *Ingres's Odalisque* come to life under the spell of *David's* harmonies and stand in ivory perfection in some sheik's harem, listening to the call of the muezzin, while the camels tramped the desert with their lumbering, swaying passing? What of *Spontini's La Vestale*? Would this faded score evoke the spirit of *Rome*, as *Gluck's* music evokes the soul of

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Greece? I can decorate my garret with Victorian trophies, antimacassars, walnut highboys, wall-paper representing Roman temples, beneath the columns of which shepherd boys play their pipes, while troops of ladies, garbed like Mrs. Leo Hunter, embark for Cythera on splendid barges. I can examine at my leisure mezzotints and engravings by John Martin, Richard Earlom, Valentine Green, Goltzius, Edelinck, or J. R. Smith, and I can enjoy the mellow cornfields and rich velvety forests of George Inness whenever I feel in the mood to do so, which is not too often. As frequently as I please I can take down from my shelves and dip into *The Monk* by M. C. Lewis, *Headlong Hall* by Thomas Love Peacock, *The Art of Dining* by Abraham Hayward, *The Truth about Tristrem Varick* by Edgar Saltus, or *Chandos* by Ouida. No strange, old-fashioned byway, no hidden cranny of painting or literature is denied me, but if I were dying of desire to experience an audition of Purcell's *Dido and Æneas*, Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*, Balfe's *The Maid of Artois*, or even Wagner's *Die Feen* or Puccini's *Edgar*, I should expire before the medicine was proffered me.

Watteau, Voltaire, Cranach, H. B. Fuller, Rodin, and Joseph Hergesheimer stand ready to please me whenever I am in the proper temper



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to appreciate their work but, unless I follow Ernest Newman's example—which I am not likely to do—and purchase a player-piano, I am dependent on the whims of the Paris Opéra or Mr. Walter Damrosch for the privilege of listening to Lully, Couperin, or Grétry. Even Ernest Newman must listen to most of this music in transcriptions—transcriptions, which he admits in his laudatory book on the subject, have been made carelessly enough, for the most part, from transcriptions already fashioned for human pianists, without reference to the orchestral scores, which the player-piano, being gifted with more than two hands, could more nearly duplicate in number of voices if not in timbres—and, in relation to such music as has not yet been cut in rolls, he would stand in precisely the same position that I stand. Could he, for instance, buy a roll of *Le Désert*? At this very instant I would rather hear a performance of Grétry's *Richard Cœur de Lion*, of which an excerpt, quoted in Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame*, has haunted me ever since I heard that opera, than the complete works of Giuseppe Verdi. Nay! I think I would eschew all other pleasures, even an evening at the theatre where Delysia plays, for an opportunity to attend a performance of the rewritten version of *Simone Boccanegra*. I might want to hear it only once, but how very

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much I do want to hear it once! At least I want to today. In 1926, when Gatti-Casazza at last mounts Simone Boccanegra at the Metropolitan Opera House I shall probably go to bed entirely ignorant of that fact. Curiosity and desire will be equally dead, in all likelihood, so far as Cornelius's *The Barber of Bagdad*, Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* are concerned, when the time arrives when it will be easy for me to satisfy this curiosity and desire.

The case with modern music is no better. It is just as difficult to gratify an ambition to hear Dukas's *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* as it is to hear Offenbach's *Barbe-Bleue*. The Boston Symphony Orchestra will no doubt perform Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* on the night when I am hungry for the *Rapsodie Espagnole*, and Bodanzky will provide this last delight on the evening I have begged providence to send me *Daphnis et Chloë*. This is all assuredly music in the modern French idiom, although Erik Satie has said, "Ravel has refused the Legion of Honour, but all his music accepts it," and we know that in ten years this epigram will become a platitude. Lately, we have heard a good deal from the modern Italians, Respighi and Malipiero, but I wanted to hear them two years ago.

On the whole, it is amazing that anybody ever

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acquires a taste for orchestral music or the opera at all. We are, it would seem, completely in the power of Messrs. Bodanzky, Gatti-Casazza, Stokovski, Pierre Monteux, Sargent and Milton Aborn, and Fortune Gallo. They not only determine what we shall hear, they also decide when we shall hear it. The situation is monstrous and unbearable. A few comparisons may serve to bring the point to you more forcibly. Suppose, for instance, that the directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art issued a decree to the effect that you could see Manet's *Boy with a Sword* only on July 17, 1922, and not again until February 4, 1930. Suppose that these gentlemen further ordered that Renoir's portrait of Madame Charpentier would be on view only on odd Sundays during Lent. Suppose that the Greek vase room or the chamber containing Chinese porcelains was open to the public only on December 6, 1921. Let us imagine another example, even more terror-inspiring. Suppose that Messrs. Brentano, Scribner and Putnam arbitrarily made a rule that the public could only buy certain books on certain days. On January 1, Putnam's would sell only the works of Harold Bell Wright, Brentano's, only Shaw's new volume of plays, Scribner's, Joseph Hergesheimer's *San Christóbal de la Habana*. On January 2, one would be permitted to purchase the novels

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of James Branch Cabell at Putnam's, Benedetto Croce's *Æsthetic* at Brentano's, and Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* at Scribner's. On January 3, Putnam's would dole out a new novel by Sinclair Lewis, Brentano's would vend a book by Arthur Machen (if they could find one),<sup>1</sup> and Scribner's would sell Mencken's *A Book of Prefaces*. On January 4, I might possibly persuade Putnam's to stack the counters with *The Tiger in the House*, Brentano's would offer Max Beerbohm's *Seven Men*, and Scribner's would display *The Newcomes* by William Makepiece Thackeray. January 5 would be the day to buy *Esther Waters* at Putnam's, William Dean Howells's *Heroines of Fiction* at Brentano's, and Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* at Scribner's. On January 6, Putnam's would sell Robert Paltock's *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, Brentano's, Donald Evans's *Sonnets from the Patagonian*, and Scribner's, Webster's *Dictionary*. Naturally, the other bookshops and the libraries would also make capricious decisions about the books of the day. This would all appear to be very strange, no doubt, and probably all of us would stop buying books, because the particular book we wanted would never be on sale on the day we wanted it,

<sup>1</sup> Written before the Machen vogue began.

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but it would be no stranger than the existing situation in the concert and opera world.

And yet, it would appear, there is no remedy. It is an unfortunate property of music that it occupies time rather than space. Concerts, therefore, must be given within certain hours, and the number of pieces that can be played during these hours—a concert that lasts over 120 minutes is too long—is strictly limited. The Metropolitan Opera House can give only one full-length opera, or not more than three short ones, in any one evening. Somebody, consequently, must make a choice, and the directors naturally choose the works which they think will appeal to the greatest number of people at the time they are played. This accounts for the fact that a symphony which perhaps has not been performed at all for several years will be announced for performance in New York by four conductors during as many weeks.

Apparently, therefore, we must put up with the inconvenience. We must listen to music when we can, where we can, and with whom we can, and not when, where, and with whom we want to. I wonder if there are others who dream of Debussy's *l'Après-midi d'un faune* while they are half-listening to Berlioz's *Fantastic Symphony*, who attend Wagner's *Die*



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Meistersinger when they would prefer to hear Gluck's *Armide*? If some one knows what can be done about it, I hope he will tell me.

*December 30, 1920.*

## *Cordite for Concerts*

Since the Florentines, whom we may credit with some taste in the matter of art, invented the opera, not a month has passed without some glabrous-headed numskull or other rising to proclaim shrilly that the lyric drama is a by-blow form, not worthy of serious consideration by respectable, high-minded lovers of music. Others than numskulls have offered contributions to this popular cause. Addison and Charles Lamb ridiculed the opera, and every critic of today has slugged it with cherry-pits and pebbles. What seems to have escaped attention is the fact that of all music-forms the opera, valiantly withstanding these attacks, has remained the most consistently popular. It is even "reformed" every half-century or so by a Gluck, a Meyerbeer, a Wagner, or a Debussy. Also, I may add, the very music critics who affect a staggering contemptuousness for music drama in the abstract spend a great deal of unnecessary time at the Metropolitan Opera House and write a great many unnecessary words about the performances there. The explanation of this phenomenon, I

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am inclined to believe, after some personal observation of the gentlemen in question, is that they like it.

Personally, I will admit frankly that I prefer the opera, even when it is bad, to a good symphony concert. No music is good enough to stand up against the depressing circumstances of a performance at Carnegie Hall. At the opera, on the other hand, there is mystery: a white arm laid carelessly over the ledge of a box in the dim light; the gleam of the jewels and the silver and gold head-dresses in the soft glow; a feather-fan half-concealing a whispered word of love or perhaps a kiss. Even on the stage, however mediocre the singing and acting, there is some display of personality, something to talk about. And in the opera house there is the opportunity to talk. Besides, I can walk in and walk out, sit down or stand up; I am not forced to wait for the band to stop playing before I take or relinquish my seat. These are superficial advantages; the heart of the matter lies deeper: the fact is that opera was written for the opera house and it belongs there. You may not care for opera but, if it amuses you, you like it in the opera house.

Listening recently to a concert given by the Schola Cantorum at Carnegie Hall, a feeling that had been groping for expression for some time

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crystallized within me, a feeling that concerts should not be given in halls, a feeling that even the idea of the concert as it exists is a false and artificial conception. It is impossible for me to enjoy music in a brilliantly lighted, badly ventilated auditorium, in the midst of a crowd of elderly, anserine ladies and gentlemen, or rapt or bored or merely fatuous juveniles, the conductor panting and sweating, the men of the band sawing and blowing, and a soprano weighing four hundred pounds puffing through Ocean, thou mighty monster! The zest for conductors, *Dirigentenliebe*, is an amusing form of nymphomania. For there are ladies who prefer the baton to the blade. Each must have her own particular *Kapellmeister*. There is impending danger of an epidemic of this neurotic disorder, and I do not think it an improbable result that, in the course of three or four years, New York will have thirty or forty symphony orchestras. I must admit that attending their concerts would give me coeliac pains, but it amuses me to watch the fandango from the safe distance which my garret affords. It is from that distance, indeed, that I shall watch all concerts henceforth.

Let us consider the occasion to which I have just referred. The estimable ladies and gentlemen who form the choir of the *Schola Cantorum*, the gentlemen in evening dress, the ladies in white

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and blue and pink frocks, performed three numbers, the Kyrie, the Gloria, and the Credo, from Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli*. This mass is a lofty and noble work. It is also difficult, in the sense that all crystal things are difficult, in the sense that it is more difficult to sing *Vedrai carino* than it is to sing *Vissi d'arte*, although Puccini's aria requires a higher and heavier voice than Mozart's. The chorus wandered through Palestrina's measures accurately enough, no doubt, but the effect was unendurable. This mass—any mass—was not composed to be sung correctly by ladies and gentlemen in evening dress to the polite approbation and discreet applause of two thousand Godless souls, the majority of whom, it is safe to say, had never set foot in a Catholic church. This mass—any mass—will only sound right when wafted out of the invisible galleries of some dimly lit cathedral, odiferous with incense, the emblems and symbols of demonology as close to mind in the fantastic carvings on the pillars and baptismal fonts as the emblems and symbols of angelology in the altar, the candles, and the vestments of the celebrating priests. The audience, the congregation, what you will, must be familiar with the intention of the mass, nay more, they must enter into the spirit of its celebration and believe in its carminative powers. Under such conditions, with how-



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ever little authority the boy Pattis may attack the high C's, the communicants will not be disturbed by these descents from the pitch. They will either doze decently or be lifted into sublimity, and the vagueness of the tones will even enhance the effect. Amelita Galli-Curci herself could compel me to listen in the gloom of a sweet-scented, damp cathedral.

The second part of the program was devoted to Spanish folk-music. The ladies and gentlemen of the choir, following the ridiculous fashion of our concert halls, stood up and stood still while they intoned the sardanas and other dance-songs, created to be shouted out by peasants, stepping merrily about, waving handkerchiefs, and exchanging busses. Several of these songs were performed as solos by the languorous and sinisterly Venusian Marguerite d'Alvarez, who gave them an authentic enough interpretation, but the very vividness of her recital warned one of the falseness of her point of attack. Within the respectable confines of Carnegie Hall she made her auditors self-conscious. Corsets and white shirts grew stiffer. Collars refused to wilt. Had she, however, been transplanted to some dirty Andalusian tavern, where she might sit in a corner, wrapped sombrely in a splendid Manila shawl, while she sang in the smoke-laden atmosphere to the accompaniment of the strum-

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ming of guitars and to the shrill cries of a dozen Gipsy girls, her

Viva Triana!  
Vivan los Sevillanos  
y Sevillanas!

would flame into life; even the cradle-songs and celebrations of the Virgin Mary would make their true effect.

There is a place for hearing music as well as a time, and I have sworn a vow that if I can only listen to music in the concert hall I shall hear it no more . . . unless, like the ladies, I may be permitted to choose my own conductor and enjoy the delights of *Dirigentenliebe*, and here the ladies hold me at a disadvantage, for Alice Delysia and Pola Negri do not wave the baton with the authentic gesture of Arthur Nikisch and Thomas Beecham. To return to my theorem, let me particularize: why do you enjoy *l'Après-midi d'un faune* more when it is presented as a ballet than when it is performed in the concert hall? Because the music is played in a suggestive atmosphere, the action and the colours and the lights supplying the place inadequately filled in the concert hall by the program notes, which are rustled and turned while the flute purls softly. The ideal spot, however, in which to listen to

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this music would be an ancient hillside near some ruined Greek temple, the band hidden and mysterious and not too near. Then one could imagine the stately, obscene ceremony between the faun and the nymphs.

Chopin's music, indubitably, should be performed in a drawing-room, an Empire or a Louis XVI drawing-room, to be precise. There should be countesses present, with firm round breasts and spreading crinolines, and if a princess or an archduchess can be provided, so much the better. Between the mazurkas and the polonaises, servants in livery should pass ices, and if a young woman can be persuaded to faint occasionally, the effect will be heightened. The flowers should be lilies, tube-roses, and gardenias, pale but strongly aromatic blooms.

Funeral marches, wedding marches, and Strauss waltzes fall into their proper environments at times, but where should one listen to the music of Brahms? Experience tells me that the music of Brahms sounds best in a German public garden, with plenty of good beer, Pilsener or Münchener, according to your taste, in hefty seidels close at hand, and more good beer in vast barrels in the nearby cellar. It will do no harm to eat black and white radishes while you give ear to the F major, and Frankfurters will be found to go excellently well with the D major.

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Brahms would be the first to be delighted with this scheme, and if he is conducting his scores in the halls of Eblis, I have no doubt he has already experimented with it himself.

For the Mozart symphonies a rococo ball-room is required, the ceiling elaborately ornamented with gold Eroses and stucco roses. If Fragonard or Boucher painted the wall-panels, that will be an advantage, and it will do no hurt to the music if they be a little indecent. The orchestra will be visible and the men must wear red coats and knee breeches of some eighteenth century style, and they must be peruked. The leader must wear the tallest peruke of all (it should tower two feet above his head), and however high he may stand on his toes in the ecstasy of the beat, his heels must never leave the floor, for these heels, red, too, should be five inches high.

Scriabin designed a temple suitable for the performances of his own music, music which demands a certain amount of subaudition, a temple of odours and colours that might have pleased des Esseintes. This temple has not yet been constructed, but compromises have been attempted. For instance, the Russian Symphony Orchestra once played Scriabin's Prometheus before a moving-picture screen on which coloured lights were projected and merged by means of a key-

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board with an electrical attachment. An effort to illustrate Siegfried's Rhine Journey with appropriate accompanying action in a washtub would make an analogous effect.

Leo Ornstein, whose favourite figure in composition is anacoluthon, should play his music on a piano balanced on a pushcart, the whole moved to the middle of Manhattan Bridge. His audience should pass in motor-cars, the chauffeurs tooting their sirens, in street-cars, the motormen madly clanging their bells, and in aeroplanes, with their engines throbbing vehemently. The result would be Jovian. I have enjoyed *The Wild Men's Dance* and *Impressions of the Thames* even in the concert hall but, if I heard them under these circumstances, I should probably break a blood-vessel.

Where should the music of Richard Strauss be performed? Hardly any two of his compositions in the same place, I should say. *Ein Heldenleben* would sound best in front of the banal colonnade and monument of Vittorio Emanuele at Rome; the *Sinfonia Domestica* in Wanamaker's; *Don Quixote* in a farmyard; *Tod und Verklärung* in Roosevelt Hospital; and *Don Juan* in a brothel or, at least, a Temple of Love. In lieu of program notes, copies of the *Contes drolatiques*, the *Sonnets* of Pietro Aretino, and *Le Journal d'une femme de*



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chambre should be distributed to the customers.

Chamber music, as I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> is written to be played and not to be listened to. Such pleasure as it gives is subjective rather than objective. As songs are a species of chamber music they are perhaps most effective if sung in a drawing-room, although there are exceptions to this rule. I have carried d'Alvarez and her Spanish ditties to an Andalusian tavern. The Two Grenadiers should be sung in vaudeville; Debussy's *La Chevelure* should be sung in bed; and Mrs. Beach's *The Year's at the Spring* should be sung at the meetings of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. As for the song recital, so-called, it is an abomination, a monstrous form of entertainment foisted on the public by the musical snobs who insist that the program shall be arranged according to their laws, a classic group, a group of German *lieder*, a French group, etc., and that the singer shall interpret these without a gesture, standing dignifiedly near the centre of the platform. There are signs that healthy interpreters with a touch of genius are breaking away from this absurd tradition.

Only concertos seem to belong exclusively to the concert hall. They are written for just this

<sup>1</sup> *Music for Museums*, a paper in *Music After the Great War*.

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kind of audience, just this kind of place. The soloist, violinist or singer or jew's-harpist, dramatizes the thing and centres the attention *visually* on himself. It is Kreisler's Beethoven, or Ysaye's Beethoven, or Sarasate's, or Paganini's, or Liszt's. Yes, this is freak music and the atmosphere of the concert hall is entirely consistent with it.

To conclude in a major key, I would say that it is obvious that some music should never be played anywhere. At the head of this class stand the compositions of Sir Edward Elgar.

*July 1, 1921.*











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